CONSIDERATIONS

ON THE

SUFFERINGS

OF

CHRIST,

In which the Hiſtory of the Paſſion, as given by the Four Evangeliſts, is connected, harmoniſed, and explained.

By J. RAMBACH,

Late Profeſſor of Divinity in the Univerſity of GIESSEN.

Tranſlated from the laſt Edition of the German.

In THREE VOLUMES.

Vol. I. Contains the Sufferings of CHRIST in the Garden, and before the Spiritual Court of the Jews.

Vol. II. His Sufferings before the Civil Tribunal of Pilate and Herod.

Vol. III. His Sufferings on Mount Golgotha.

LONDON:

Printed for A. LINDE, Bookſeller to her Royal Highneſs the Princeſs of WALES, in Catharine-Street in the Strand.

M DCC LIX.

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ON THE

SOPHISMS

OF

CHRIST.

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M DCC LIX.

THE

AUTHOR's PREFACE.

Candid Reader,

I Here preſent you with 'Conſiderations on 'the Hiſtory of the Sufferings of our 'Lord and Saviour Jeſus Chriſt.'

In the year 1721, I expounded the 'Account of the internal Sufferings of Chriſt in 'the Garden' to a great number of ſtudents, in the time ſet apart for that exerciſe in Lent. After a ſhort illuſtration of the hiſtorical circumſtances, I drew from them ſome inferences, which I enlarged upon, and inculcated on the minds of my pupils agreeably to the circumſtances of the audience. In Lent 1722, I diſcourſed on the 'Account of the external Sufferings of Chriſt in the Garden.' Many of my hearers, having ſignified their earneſt deſire to read in print what I had delivered to them on this ſubject, I judged it proper to comply with their requeſt; and in the very ſame year, I committed both Treatiſes to the preſs.

Though ſuch an imperfect ſketch met with a very kind reception, and though I received many exhortations to continue the work; I was thoroughly determined in myſelf to leave the

continuance of it to abler pens. In the mean time, I received a call from *Jena* to *Halle*; and there I found a desirable opportunity for illustrating the other parts of our Saviour's sufferings, in a public practical lecture which I was appointed to hold every Saturday. I therefore set apart some of the above-mentioned lectures for the 'Considerations on the History of the 'Sufferings of Christ before the Ecclesiastical 'Court of the Jews;' and those Considerations, after I had revised and enlarged them, I published in the years 1728 and 1729. These were soon followed by the 'Sufferings of Jesus 'before Pilate and Herod,' and in 1730, by the 'Sufferings of our blessed Lord on Mount 'Golgotha.' Thus I have given the reader a brief account of this Work.

As to the method I have observed in treating on this subject, it is as follows:

1. The ground work of the CONSIDERATIONS is the account of our Saviour's Passion given by the four Evangelists, which I have endeavoured to harmonise and connect together. To every part of the history of the Passion is prefixed the several texts thus harmonised; and at the beginning of each CONSIDERATION, the part which is there treated of is repeated, and the Evangelists, from whom it is taken, quoted. In the last Volume, the foundation of the IV. IX. XII. and XIII. CONSIDERATIONS is laid in certain types and prophecies out of the Old Testament, concerning the sufferings of the Messiah.

2. The harmoniſed Text is divided into paragraphs, for the ſake of perſpicuity and order, in the diſcuſſion of each particular.

3. Theſe larger paragraphs are afterwards, according to the ſucceſſion of circumſtances, divided into ſmaller; and each of the latter are explained in their order.

4. It was not my intention to enter on a diffuſe and critical expoſition of every particular circumſtance of the hiſtory of the Paſſion, or to undertake the ſolution of every difficulty: The Text, however, is ſufficiently illuſtrated, ſometimes in a conciſe manner, and ſometimes more at large; the energy of the principal words in the original is pointed out; the difficulties in ſome meaſure removed by obſervations on the counſel of the Divine Wiſdom, and the right of Divine Retaliation.

5. From the Texts thus illuſtrated are deduced ſeveral practical doctrines; ſome of which naturally flow from the import of the words of the Text, and others contain uſeful obſervations on the ſame. Some are adapted for admonition and reproof, ſome for encouragement, and others for conſolation under afflictions. Some are ſuited to the circumſtances of all Chriſtians in general; others are more particularly adapted to the Academic ſtate. Some appear to contain only moral precepts; but theſe are improved, and, as it were, interwoven with the very eſſence of Chriſtianity. The end and deſign of many of them is to diſplay the reſemblance between Chriſt and his members in the myſtery

of the Croſs, and to repreſent the true ſtate and condition of the world which ſtill lies buried in wickedneſs.

6. To each CONSIDERATION is annexed a ſhort prayer, in order to inſtruct thoſe, who are unacquainted with mental prayer, how they may liſt up their hearts to God in devout ejaculations at the end of every CONSIDERATION.

7. In the margin of ſome of the pages are inſerted a few Latin notes, critical and explanatory, which may be of uſe to ſtudents; but the unlearned reader may paſs over them, I hope, without offence.

From theſe notes it will appear that the whole did not proceed from my own reflections; but that, ſometimes, after due examination, I have made uſe of the thoughts and opinions of others on the ſubject.

If the Reader, according to Luther's inſtructions, from the manifold ſufferings of Chriſt conſiders the abomination of ſin, and the greatneſs of God's diſpleaſure againſt the wickedneſs of man; and in this mirrour of ſin and wrath continues ſurveying himſelf till, by a ſenſe of a godly ſorrow and ſalutary contrition his conſcience is brought to the fellowſhip of his Saviour's ſufferings, and ſin be abſolutely mortified, he will reap unſpeakable benefit by this mean performance.

On the other hand, if he ſeeks relief to a troubled conſcience, by the conſideration of the tranſcendent love of the ſuffering Redeemer to mankind; if he looks on Jeſus as the propitiation

tiation for his ſins, and applies to himſelf, by faith and repentance, the obedience of Chriſt exemplified in his ſufferings, as a friendly veil for his diſobedience and imperfections; if by the ſame medium he lays hold on the meritorious ſatisfaction of Chriſt, and humbly implores forgiveneſs of his ſins at the Throne of Grace in conſideration of that ſatisfaction, he will not loſe his labour in the peruſal of theſe ſheets.

Laſtly, if he gives himſelf up ſoul and body to our crucified Saviour, as his property purchaſed by his precious blood; and deſires, by the help of his Holy Spirit, to be inſpired with a willingneſs and ability to imitate thoſe Divine virtues manifeſted in the ſufferings of Chriſt, eſpecially his patience, meekneſs, and humility, he will by no means loſe his reward.

May the crucified Jeſus, who is now glorified and exhalted to the right hand of God, grant that every one who reads this Work may make ſuch a bleſſed uſe of it, that his glorious name may be praiſed to all eternity! May the great Sower cauſe the truths ſet forth in theſe ſheets to be fertile ſeeds, which may abundantly produce the fruits of righteouſneſs, and grow up to their deſired maturity! May we all be powerfully awakened by theſe Conſiderations to a lively faith in his name, and an earneſt deſire to imitate ſo bright an example!

To the immaculate Lamb that was ſlain, who by his grace enabled me to proſecute this work, be aſcribed praiſe and thankſgiving for ever and ever. Amen.

Halle,
Feb. 24, 1730.

J. Rambach.



J. P. Fre.

J. P. FRESENIUS's

PREFACE

To the laſt German Edition.

ALL Divine Truths reſt on an eternal foundation, and conſequently are in themſelves unalterable; but the ideas of men concerning them are ſubject to many changes, which are cauſed by their own weakneſs and imperfection. Hence it happens, that from time to time theſe truths have been modelled by mankind into different ſyſtems, which, if the eſſence of religion remains entire, ought not to be abſolutely condemned. But ſuch is the mutability of man, that he even preſumes to miſrepreſent theſe eternal Divine Truths, by adding to them in

ſome

ſome points, and diminiſhing from them in others; and this is the wretched ſource from which the moſt dangerous errors have ſprung in all ages. That kind of imperfection in the ideas of men is particularly to be guarded againſt, when they find fault with God for making known ſo many truths to them, and imagine, that eternal ſalvation is to be obtained without embracing the whole ſyſtem of Divine Revelation.

In our days a new ſect has ſprung up, which aſſumes the name of Unitas Fratrum, or *Moravian Brethren*; who under a pretence of preaching only the principal Divine Truth, namely, that of our Redemption by Chriſt, have taken it into their heads in a manner to ſet aſide all the other Divine Truths, or at leaſt do not preach and inculcate them as they ought to do. This is a dangerous error, and productive of many miſchiefs. This induced me the more willingly to comply with the deſire, that I would add a new Preface to the late Dr. Rambach's excellent 'Conſiderations on the Suf-'ferings of Chriſt;' in which I am determined to place this point in a better light; hoping that in theſe times, when ſo many enthuſiaſtic ſects are daily ſpringing up, it may conduce to guard many againſt ſuch erroneous doctrines, which is my earneſt wiſh. Beſides, ſuch a ſubject may very properly be prefixed to theſe Conſiderations on the Sufferings of Chriſt.

In

In considering this subject, the following question naturally arises, and demands a solution:

"Whether we are to rest only in understanding, meditating, and preaching on the "Passion of our Saviour, as the *Moravians* "pretend, so as to neglect other Divine Truths?

The number of those who answer this question in the affirmative, though not in plain words, yet in fact, daily increases. However, it must be owned, that many of them do not consider with what drift the Author of that deluded sect strove to bring this most dangerous doctrine into vogue. Hence great numbers are become so infatuated, that in treating of spiritual matters, they will neither hear nor speak of any thing but the "Sufferings of Jesus; of the "dear bleeding Lambkin that was slain; of "blood and wounds, &c." All other truths, which God has revealed in his Word, are with them wood, straw, and stubble; so that they despise and loath them.

Before I enter into a closer examination of their strange tenets, it will be necessary to give a further explanation of the question proposed above.

The question is not, "Whether the doctrine "of reconciliation by Christ be the most essen-"tial truth of Christianity?" This I readily grant. It is, as it were, the center of Divine Revelation, to which not only all other Divine Truths

Truths tend; but it was likewiſe on this account that they were revealed.

Further, it is not aſked, "Whether we are, "above all things, to preach Chriſt's ſatisfac-"tion;" for this is alſo granted. The preaching of the New Teſtament is, in the ſtricteſt ſenſe, 'the miniſtry of reconciliation (*a*).' Therefore its chief end and deſign muſt be to preach reconciliation by Chriſt.

Laſtly, neither is the queſtion, "Whether all "Divine Truths are to be repreſented accord-"ing to their connection with the doctrine of "redemption by Chriſt;" for of this we make no doubt. The influence which the doctrine of redemption by Chriſt has on the whole ſyſtem of Chriſtianity, and the reciprocal influence which all the doctrines of the Chriſtian religion have on that of the redemption, muſt be continually inculcated, and be the principal point of view in all Evangelical diſcourſes. If this be entirely neglected, the miniſtry of an Evangelical preacher is not a miniſtry of reconciliation according to the New Teſtament, and his doctrines will, for the moſt part, be no more than a heatheniſh ſyſtem of morality.

But the real ſtate of the queſtion is this: "Whether it be proper, that in preaching the "doctrine of reconciliation by Chriſt, all other "Divine Truths ſhould be neglected, totally "ſet aſide, or only ſlightly intimated?"

(*a*) 2 Cor. v. 18, 19, 20.

to

To this I answer in the negative; for which I adduce the following reasons.

1. Such a method of preaching contradicts the preaching of which we have specimens in the Holy Scriptures.

The doctrine of redemption by Christ is, indeed, set forth in Scripture as the only ground of our salvation; and it is plainly signified to us in several parts of the New Testament, That we are to derive from thence our spiritual strength for real godliness. Nevertheless, it also reveals several other Divine Truths, and represents the doctrines of salvation in a very extensive light. Our blessed Saviour was unquestionably the wisest and most perfect preacher that ever appeared in the world; and consequently he best knew what was necessary for mankind. Now if we take a view of his ministry, we shall be immediately convinced, that Christ has given men divers informations and instructions; and that he did not confine their minds to the central point of Redemption, but recommended to them likewise many other Divine truths. Our blessed Lord, indeed, frequently says, That he came to save those who were lost, to call sinners to repentance, to relieve the weary and heavy laden, and to lay down his life for mankind; but at the same time, he also illustrates the moral Law, exhorts to the practice of christian virtues, enjoins self-denial and an indifference to the world, requires the love of God and our neighbour, directs us

to

to follow or imitate him, and, in all his preaching, adapts himself to the circumstances of his hearers. This was also the method of proceeding observed by his Apostles, who, next to Christ himself, were the most extraordinary teachers that ever appeared on earth. They, indeed, every where extol the Redemption by Christ; yet, at the same time, they do not forget very zealously to set the other Divine Truths in a striking light, and to shew the design of their ministry was, that Christians 'might abound in knowledge and all judgment, 'in all wisdom and prudence; that they might 'approve things, or virtues, that are excellent (*b*), &c.' Not a single error that sprung up in their time is left without animadversion; and though their Epistles are short, they often enter on a full examination and confutation of false doctrines: Nay, what is still more extraordinary, they warn their converts against any future departure from some wholsome doctrines, which have no immediate relation to that of Redemption by Christ.

Our adversaries, indeed, appeal to these words of St. Paul, 'I determined not to know any 'thing among you save Jesus Christ, and him 'crucified (*c*).' Hence they would infer, that the Apostle preached nothing else but Christ the crucified Saviour; and consequently, that

(*b*) Phil. i. 9. Ephes. i. 8.

(*c*) 1 Cor. ii. 2.

they

they came nearest to the Apostles method, who pass by all other Divine Truths, and make the sufferings of Jesus their only topic. In answer to this, we may observe, that when Paul said that he was determined not to know any thing but Jesus Christ, and him crucified, the contrast there is not between this, and other Divine Truths contained in the Word of God. For he perfectly knew, taught, and inculcated those truths, as is evident from all his discourses and writings; and even in this very Epistle to the Corinthians, he handles several other points besides the sufferings of Jesus. But the Apostle, in this passage, had his eye on the doctrines of mere human wisdom; by inculcating which the false Apostles imitated the heathen philosophers, in order to be more highly esteemed among the weak and ignorant. This explanation of the Apostle's words may be plainly proved from the context. For, in both his Epistles to the Corinthians, he discourses of the difference between Divine and human wisdom, and characterizes the latter as accounting the Gospel or preaching of Christ foolishness, which, by those who believe in Christ Jesus, is known and experienced to be the wisdom of God. Hence the Apostle says, 'And I, brethren, when I 'came to you, came not with excellency of 'speech, or of wisdom, declaring unto you the 'testimony of God: for I determined not to 'know any thing among you save Jesus Christ,

'and him crucified. And my ſpeech, and my 'preaching, was not with enticing words 'of man's wiſdom, but in demonſtration of the 'Spirit, and of power; that your faith ſhould 'not ſtand in the wiſdom of men, but in the 'power of God (*e*).' By theſe words he means that he preaches Chriſt ſimply, and by Divine conviction, without any mixture of the empty fruitleſs doctrines of Pagan philoſophy.

2. The doctrine of redemption by Chriſt is itſelf injured, by a neglect of the Divine Truths which are connected with it.

For inſtance, what idea can we conceive of the perſon of our Redeemer, without the doctrine of his two natures, and of the holy Trinity? or how can we underſtand his ſatisfaction, without being previouſly inſtructed in a knowledge of the Divine Juſtice, of Sin, of the Law, and of the image of God in man? How can the doctrine of the redemption by Chriſt be maintained againſt doubt and diſbelief, if we take no pains to know the grounds on which it is founded, and the conditions by which it may be obtained? The Divine Truths are all connected together; ſo that if one link of the chain be neglected and broken, the reſt is all error and confuſion.

However fluently thoſe who break this golden chain may talk of the Saviour and his merits,

(*e*) 1 Cor. ii. 1, 2, 4, 5.

they

they have loſt the true foundation of religion; ſo that notwithſtanding they are continually extolling the ſufferings of Chriſt, they in effect undervalue them. In vain do they make tedious and ſenſeleſs harangues on the croſs and death of Chriſt, on blood, wounds, *&c.* They are but Phariſees and Pelagians; for they are loſt to all knowledge of their inward corruption, the demands of the Law, and of their dreadful lapſe in Adam; and conſequently they cannot fundamentally perceive what it is that Chriſt has acquired for them. For he that is ignorant, or entertains wrong notions of the Fall from innocence and perfection, knows not what he has loſt in Adam, nor does that man conſequently know what Chriſt has obtained for him. If a man be ignorant of what the Law requires of us, and the dreadful extent of the tranſgreſſion of it in reſpect of its guilt, puniſhment, and dominion over us; it is likewiſe impoſſible that he ſhould have a right knowledge of what Chriſt has done for us, in his active and paſſive obedience.

3. It is neceſſary that we ſhould know more concerning Chriſt, than what is barely included in his ſufferings only.

As the doctrine concerning Chriſt is the centre of all Divine Truths, ſo the doctrine of his Paſſion is the eſſential part of all that can be ſaid of Chriſt himſelf. However, there are ſeveral other particulars relating to him, which muſt be

known that we may by faith be partakers of his ſufferings, that we may fortify ourſelves againſt all aſſaults on that account, and that we may draw from him the ſtrength and firmneſs neceſſary to a holy life. Conſequently it is requiſite that I ſhould know, that Jeſus Chriſt is the true Meſſiah, and on what grounds I am to account him ſuch. This leads me directly to enquire into the prophecies and types, by which he is prefigured in the Old Teſtament. I ought further to know that he is God and man in one perſon, and the reaſon why he muſt be ſuch; and this refers me to the proofs, by which theſe truths are vindicated and eſtabliſhed againſt the enemies of Chriſtianity. I muſt know that he has made ſatisfaction for penitent Believers, not only by his paſſion, but by his perfect obedience to the Law, *&c.* I am not only to look upon him as my High Prieſt who hath redeemed me and intercedes for me, but likewiſe as my Prophet who inſtructs me, and as my King who governs me. The holy Scriptures repreſent Chriſt not only as the Mercy-ſeat to which we are to draw near in faith, but likewiſe as a pattern whom we are to follow and imitate in our Chriſtian calling. The Scripture, it is true, ſpeaks of his death, but, at the ſame time, it informs us of his reſurrection; it ſhews his humiliation, but it likewiſe treats of his exaltation; it acquaints us with his coming in the fleſh, but it alſo puts us in mind of his coming in

in glory to judge the world. It is therefore to little purpoſe that he, who does not know Chriſt in theſe ſeveral characters and circumſtances, is continually diſcourſing on his ſufferings: and as Chriſt is divided in his doctrine, he cannot ſecure his true felicity by him; or at leaſt he cannot build his faith on ſuch a ſolid foundation that it ſhall be proof againſt rains and tempeſt.

4. Chriſtianity is in danger of being extinguiſhed by an indifference in religion, when ſo many neceſſary Divine Truths are neglected and deſpiſed.

A cool indifference in points of faith may juſtly be termed the bane of religion. It is the ſource from which a numerous brood of errors ſpring up. Theſe are, a contempt of Divine Revelation, an indifference towards many truths revealed in the Scripture, and an averſion to thoſe rational perſons who zealouſly adhere to ſound doctrine, *&c.* If a man gives himſelf no concern about the greateſt part of revealed truths, the natural conſequence of this will be a groſs ignorance; and this at length produces ſuch a turn of mind, that he thinks it a matter of indifference whether he believes any of thoſe truths or not.

Thoſe who will diſcourſe of nothing but of our Saviour, and of his blood and wounds, are at firſt perhaps ſo far from imagining that they are on the brink of that extreme danger, to which

the ignorance of other truths and the neglect of other duties can miſlead people, that they think their ſouls are ſafe if they do but ſtick to a ſingle article of the ſufferings of Chriſt. But when this doctrine of preaching the ſufferings of Chriſt, to the neglect of other divine and moral truths, comes to prevail over whole communities, the fatal conſequence is unavoidable to many; which has been too much verified by melancholy experience.

5. The doctrine of the ſufferings of Jeſus may, by ſuch irrational and indelicate repetitions, become diſguſtful to thoſe who are not agitated by the ſame enthuſiaſtic frenzy.

This is, in itſelf, the moſt intereſting doctrine in the Chriſtian religion, and ought to be treated on with the deepeſt veneration; but that this veneration for our Saviour's ſufferings is injured by the prevalence of a certain frantic manner of preaching, when the teacher mentions nothing but the ſufferings, blood, and wounds of our Saviour, is evident partly from the preſent unhappy ſituation of many members of the church of God, and partly from daily experience. I will ſuppoſe, what is not often the caſe, that all Chriſtian preachers, who adopt ſuch an irrational manner of teaching, would endeavour at all times and in all places to ſpeak of the ſufferings of Chriſt with fervour and veneration; yet I would adviſe them to recollect, that the people to whom they preach are a mixed multitude.

titude. The greateſt part of them are careleſs, lukewarm, and unſettled, or perhaps hypocrites, and do not receive the Word with that reverence with which it is delivered to them; conſequently they will ſpeak of it in a carnal, irreverent, and indecent manner, according to their various diſpoſitions and capacities. This has been confirmed in our days by fatal experience. For, ſince the above-mentioned enthuſiaſtic manner of teaching has been introduced among the Moravian communities, great numbers of diſciples have been known to come from thence, who, on all occaſions, without any thought or reverence, have their mouths full of "Saviour, "Blood and Wounds, Croſs and Death, bleed-"ing Lamb, *&c.*" and theſe forms are as current among them, and as inattentively uttered, as the name of God and Jeſus Chriſt are abuſed in the common aſſeverations of the prophane. I have often heard this with ſenſible grief; and my ſoul has been deeply affected in obſerving, that perſons who have always the words Lord, Saviour, *&c.* on their tongues, not only utter what they ſay of him without the leaſt awe or reflection; but in their whole demeanor, in all their dealings with men, ſhew not the leaſt traces of the holy temper that was in Chriſt Jeſus. I have alſo heard many melancholy complaints from ſincere, well-diſpoſed Chriſtians, who on ſuch occaſions were tempted with a kind of diſguſt againſt the ſufferings of Chriſt,

occa-

occaſioned by the levity of theſe profane babblers.

6. They arraign the Divine Wiſdom, and grievouſly ſin againſt it, who do not think the truths which it judged neceſſary to reveal, worthy to be conſidered and publicly taught in Chriſtian congregations.

God, in all his proceedings, acts with the moſt conſummate wiſdom, and has a ſufficient reaſon for every thing he does. Had it not been neceſſary and profitable, or had it been hurtful for men to know ſo many Divine Truths as he has been pleaſed to reveal to us in his Word, he certainly would not have revealed them. And if the doctrine of the ſufferings of Chriſt had been alone ſufficient for us, he would have made known no other. But ſince he has revealed ſo many other glorious truths, equally divine, together with it; it is a very preſumptuous ſin to take no notice of them, to decry them, and to hold them unworthy of any ſerious conſideration. It is even aſſerted by ſome, that other truths only tend to hinderance, and that to enter on an inveſtigation of them is detrimental to our faith. What is this but a bold carping temper which oppoſes itſelf to the Divine Wiſdom, and attempts to mend what God had before approved of?

A faithful Miniſter of the Goſpel, on the contrary, will adhere to that method of preaching, which continually ſets forth our Redemption

tion by Chriſt, as it is connected with other Divine Truths, and will always lead his hearers to the true foundation of religion, and fix them ſteady againſt every wind of doctrine.

In this claſs we may juſtly reckon the late Dr. Rambach. It is true, the grand point which he aimed at in his teaching was, indeed, the reconciliation accompliſhed by Chriſt Jeſus; yet he did not omit to diſcourſe of the wiſdom of God diſplayed in other Divine Truths, and, both in the pulpit and by his pen, diligently to inculcate them. In theſe his Conſiderations on the ſufferings of Chriſt, he has given an evident proof of it: For though he has chiefly in view the ſufferings of our Saviour; yet he alſo, at the ſame time, extends his reflections to all the circumſtances which accompanied thoſe ſufferings.

This valuable book is eſteemed one of his beſt treatiſes; and, what is more, it is indiſputably the beſt book extant on the ſufferings of Chriſt. Whoever will read it with attention muſt account it to be a moſt valuable jewel, which God, through this his faithful inſtrument, has given to his church. But there is no need of a long panegyric on theſe excellent Conſiderations: They are already well known and valued in the Evangelical church in Germany, and the great bleſſing, which has hitherto attended them among numberleſs perſons of all ranks, is the trueſt panegyric we can beſtow upon them. I had always a great eſteem for Dr. Rambach's writings

writings in general, ſome of which I forwarded to the preſs, and on all occaſions uſed to recommend them on account of the ſolid and edifying inſtructions they contain. Beſides, it was my happineſs to live with the learned and pious Author in the moſt intimate friendſhip.

May God be pleaſed to grant that his bleſſing may attend this pious work, and from the fullneſs of Chriſt, may he ſend down on thoſe who peruſe it the power of faith and holineſs!

Francfort on the Mayne,
December 17, 1744.

J. P. Fresenius.

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OF

OF THE

INTERNAL SUFFERINGS

OF

CHRIST

In the Garden at the Mount of Olives.

The Accounts given by the four Evangeliſts (*a*), connected and harmoniſed.

'THEN cometh Jeſus with them unto a place called Gethſemanè, where was a garden, into which Jeſus and his diſciples entered. But Judas, who betrayed him, alſo knew the place; for Jeſus oft-times reſorted thither with his diſciples.

'And when he was come into the garden, he ſaid to his diſciples, Sit ye here, while I

(*a*) Matth. xxvi. 36—46. Mark xiv. 32—42. Luke xxii. 40—46. John xviii. 1, 2.

'go and pray yonder. Pray, that ye enter not 'into temptation.

'And he took with him Peter, and the 'two ſons of Zebedee, James, and John, and 'began to be ſorrowful and very heavy. And 'Jeſus ſaid unto them, My ſoul is exceeding 'ſorrowful, even unto death: tarry ye here 'and watch with me.

'And he went a little farther, and was with-'drawn from them about a ſtone's caſt, and 'kneeled down, and fell on his face on the 'ground, and prayed, That, if it were poſſi-'ble the hour might paſs from him.

'And he ſaid, Father, all things are poſſi-'ble, unto thee; take away this cup from me: 'Nevertheleſs not what I will, but what thou 'wilt.

'And he cometh to his diſciples, and findeth 'them aſleep; and he ſaith to Peter: Simon, 'ſleepeſt thou? couldeſt thou not watch with 'me one hour? Watch ye and pray, that ye 'enter not into temptation: The ſpirit indeed 'is willing; but the fleſh is weak.

'And he went away again the ſecond time, 'and prayed, and ſpake the ſame words: O 'my Father! if this cup may not paſs away 'from me, except I drink it, thy will be done. 'And he came and found them aſleep again; 'for their eyes were heavy, neither wiſt they 'what to anſwer him.

'And he left them, and went away again, 'and prayed the third time, ſaying the ſame 'words:

'words: Father, if thou be willing, remove 'this cup from me; nevertheleſs, not my will 'but thine be done. And there appeared an 'Angel unto him from heaven, ſtrengthening 'him. And being in an agony, he prayed more 'earneſtly; and his ſweat was, as it were, great 'drops of blood falling down to the ground.

'And when he roſe up from prayer, and 'came to his diſciples the third time, he found 'them ſleeping for ſorrow. And he ſaid unto 'them *, Will ye yet ſleep, and take your 'reſt? Why ſleep ye? Behold, the hour is 'come; and the Son of Man is betrayed into 'the hands of ſinners. Riſe up, let us go! 'Lo! he that betrayeth me is at hand. Pray, 'that ye enter not into temptation.

A PREPARATORY PRAYER.

LORD Jeſus! the author and finiſher of our faith, who didſt endure the pains of the croſs, and embrace ſorrow, when thou mighteſt have reigned in joy; bleſſing and eternal praiſe be to thee for thy free love, which moved thee, in our ſtead, to enter on the field of battle, and to obtain a glorious victory, the benefit of which all thy ſpiritual Iſrael might partake. Illuminate our eyes, that

* The author has very judiciouſly rendered this ſentence interrogatively; whereas the *Engliſh* tranſlation makes it very flat, 'ſleep on now, and take your reſt,' as if it was a time to ſleep when they and their Maſter were in imminent danger. *W.*

they may be capable of rightly diſcerning the myſteries of the internal agonies of thy ſoul, with which thou haſt pleaded our cauſe before the tribunal of the ſupreme juſtice. May our thoughts be ſo penetrated with the divine flames of thy endleſs love, that our ſtony hearts may be thoroughly warmed and ſoftened. Grant this for the ſake of that tranſcendent love of thine. Amen.

CONSIDERATION I.

The ſcene of the internal Sufferings of JESUS CHRIST *(b).*

'THEN cometh Jeſus with them unto 'a place called Gethſemanè, where was 'a garden, into which Jeſus and his diſciples 'entered. But Judas, who betrayed him, 'alſo knew the place; for Jeſus oft-times 'reſorted thither with his diſciples.'

Theſe words contain a ſummary account,

Firſt, Of the place where Chriſt entered upon his ſpiritual conflict; and

Secondly, Of the company who attended him thither.

I.

The place was a farm or country-houſe at the foot of the Mount of Olives, called Geth-

(b) From Matth. xxvi. 36. Mark xiv. 32. John xviii. 1, 2.

ſemanè,

ſemanè, either from the oil-preſſes * in which the olives growing in the adjacent grounds were preſſed, or from the fatneſs of the ſoil, and fertility of the valley. As the ſingular providence of God directed all our Saviour's ſufferings, and the moſt minute circumſtances attending them; ſo may it be reaſonably ſuppoſed that it was not a mere matter of chance, that his internal ſufferings happened in this place.

It was, *firſt*, a valley at the foot of a mountain, and conſequently a proper theatre for Chriſt's deepeſt humiliation to be exhibited on. When our bleſſed Saviour intended to manifeſt his glory to ſome of his diſciples, he led them up on a high mountain *(c)*; but now, as the ſame diſciples were to be witneſſes of his loweſt abaſement, he retires with them to an obſcure deep valley. In the former caſe, the nature of the thing required, that it ſhould be repreſented on an elevated conſpicuous place; in the latter, a lowly valley bore the greateſt analogy to the tranſaction; for in this inſtance, the Son of God deſcends from the high ſummit of his divine majeſty into the valley of the loweſt abaſement. When he was to be glorified, he choſe to be

* *Nonnulli ſcilicet nomen compoſitum eſſe putant ex* גת, (LXX. & Joſ. XI. 22.) *torcular, et* שמן *oleum, undè pluralis Talmudicus* שמני *q. d.* locus torcularium oleaceorum. *Sic* LIGHTFOOT *in* Horis Talm. in IV. Evang. p. 81. *Alii derivant ex* גא, *vallis et* שמני *cum* ד *præfixo genitivi.*

(*c*) Matth. xvii. 1.

nearer heaven, the true ſeat of glory; when he humbles himſelf, he choſe to deſcend on the earth, that he might expiate the preſumptuous crime of our firſt Parents which they committed on earth, and alſo to ſet to the inhabitants thereof an example of true lowlineſs and humiliation. In the Old Teſtament, the moſt glorious manifeſtations of the Divine preſence were diſplayed on high mountains. The law was given on the ſummit of a hill; on a mountain God exhibited to the view of Moſes the land of Canaan, and on a mountain God made himſelf known to Elijah; but here the moſt ſolemn manifeſtation of God's holineſs, juſtice, and love to mankind in the ſufferings of his Son, is tranſacted in a low depreſſed valley. Who will now preſume to ſay that the Lord is only a 'God of the hills, and not of the 'plains and valleys *(d)*?' For now the tranſcendent glory of the Lord is manifeſted alſo in a valley, though covered under the gloomy veil of ſufferings. Now we may be aſſured, that 'neither height nor depth can ſeparate 'us from the love of God *(e)*.' Chriſt has ſanctified both the one and the other; the Bleſſed Jeſus hath conſecrated heights and depths. So that if God brings us into the low valley of an abject ſtate; if our way to eternal bliſs lies 'through the vale of tears *(f)*,' let us conſider that the bleſſed feet of our Lord

(d) 1 Kings xx. 28. *(e)* Rom. viii. 34. *(f)* Pſ. lxxxiv. 7.

and

and Saviour have trodden the dreary path before us.

Secondly, It was the 'valley of oil or of 'fatneſs.' This circumſtance was likewiſe directed by the hand of God; and the place may now juſtly deſerve that name, ſince He entered it who 'was anointed with the oil of gladneſs 'above his fellows *(g)*;' though, for a time he emptied himſelf here of the ſenſible effects of this 'oil of gladneſs,' to procure it again for the human race. This rich and fertile valley is a type of the ſpiritual fertility, which was to be the conſequence of Chriſt's paſſion; even in the accurſed ſoil of the pagans, till then productive only of thorns and thiſtles. Now ſhall 'the wilderneſs and the ſolitary place be glad, 'and the deſert ſhall rejoice *(h)*.' Now the ſterile heart of man, being manured by the blood of Chriſt, ſhall bring forth the peaceable fruits of righteouſneſs.

But, *thirdly*, the place where Chriſt's ſpiritual ſufferings commenced is ſtill more particularly ſpecified, by the addition, That it was a Garden; which appears to have belonged to the farm and adjoining to it. If it was not by accident that the ſufferings of Chriſt began in a valley, much leſs was it without a divine appointment, that they began and ended in a garden; began in this, his conflict with death, and ended in his burial, which was performed in a

(g) Pſ. xlv. 8. *(h)* Iſaiah xxxv. 1.

garden. By this means, unqueſtionably, the Divine wiſdom takes us, as it were, by the hand, and leads our thoughts to the garden of Eden, the place of our unhappy fall. It was but fit that in ſuch a place where, by ſin, we had alienated ourſelves from God, that important tranſaction, by which the door to a communion with him was to be again opened to us, ſhould begin. Where the curſe was firſt denounced, there the foundation for obtaining the bleſſing was to be laid. Where ſin firſt entered into the world, there alſo was it firſt to be expiated.

Another circumſtance, very obſervable in the hiſtory of Chriſt's ſufferings, is the juſtice of divine retaliation; for the ſatisfaction of Chriſt was to be attended with circumſtances ſimilar to thoſe of the firſt fall, which are alſo incidental to other ſins. Now, a part of divine retaliation is, that God often puniſhes the ſins of man at the very ſame place where they were committed. Thus Samſon's eyes were put out at Gaza (*i*), where he had made a wrong uſe of them in unchaſte looks and laſcivious glances (*k*). The dogs licked up Ahab's blood on the ſpot, where he had ſhed the blood of Naboth (*l*); and the ſame thing may be here obſerved in the vicarious puniſhment of our great Repreſentative. In a garden we

(*i*) Judges, xvi. 21. (*k*) Ibid. ver. 1. (*l*) 1 Kings, xxi. 19; xxii. 38.

had

had preſumptuouſly ſinned; and in a garden is our bleſſed Lord puniſhed for our ſin.

What wanton ſcenes of dalliance and ebriety are often exhibited in gardens, during the heat of ſummer, under the ſecret covert of guilty ſhades! Never ſhould a ſerious Chriſtian ſet his foot in a garden without calling to mind the ſevere agonies, which Chriſt ſuffered in the fatal garden of Gethſemanè.

But again, this garden is further deſcribed as a place often frequented by Chriſt and his diſciples, and likewiſe well known to the perfidious traitor. Concerning the firſt it is ſaid, 'Jeſus oft times reſorted hither with his diſci-'ples;' ſo that this was the place whither he uſually retired with his diſciples, when he was inclined to be in a calm ſolitude. And, without doubt, the owner of this farm was a cordial friend to our bleſſed Lord, and received him at his houſe with ſingular pleaſure; ſince, otherwiſe, our Saviour would not have intruded himſelf an unwelcome gueſt. Hence we may learn the following truths:

1. Where the Lord Jeſus is cordially entertained, there he delights to be. He is a moſt kind, loving friend, and eaſy to be intreated. In him is no moroſeneſs, no auſterity or haughtineſs. The way to gain his favour and friendſhip is always open, 'for his delight is in the 'children of men (*m*).' 'How he loveth the 'people (*n*)!' Men are often fickle, and take

(*m*) Prov. viii. 31. (*n*) Deut. xxx. 3.

pleaſure

pleaſure in change; but he is ever conſtant and unchangeable in his friendſhip. What he forbad his diſciples to do, *viz.* Ye ſhall not go from one houſe to another (*o*), he himſelf does by no means practiſe. Where he has once entered, he does not willingly leave the place: Let us therefore give up our hearts to be a perpetual abode for ſuch an amiable gueſt.

2. The nearer the hour of ſuffering approaches, the more cloſely ought we to aſſociate ourſelves with the children of God. The Lord Jeſus, before this criſis, uſed to pray alone; and for that purpoſe uſually fixed on ſome ſolitary place in a deſart, or on a mountain apart (*p*): but on the days immediately preceding his paſſion, when he did not paſs the night in Jeruſalem, he frequently reſorted, with his diſciples, to this place; without doubt, in order to pray and prepare himſelf for the ſufferings and the pangs of death, which were then approaching. Hereby he has likewiſe ſanctified, to his members, this communion in prayer, and recommended and eſtabliſhed it by his great example.

Another particular mentioned of this field of conflict was, that it was known to the traitor. 'But Judas, who betrayed him, alſo knew the 'place.' This is taken notice of by St. John, on purpoſe to obviate any ſurmiſe, that Jeſus went into the garden with a view of concealing himſelf, and flying from the face of danger.

(*o*) Luke x. 7. (*p*) Matth. xiv. 22, 23. Luke vi. 12.

But

But the caſe was far otherwiſe: at this time he made choice of a known place with which the betrayer was well acquainted. This is a proof of the willing chearfulneſs with which Chriſt entered on his ſufferings, and is truly an important point to be laid to heart in the hiſtory of our Saviour's paſſion. Judas knew the place; but Chriſt was alſo ſenſible that the traitor did know it. He might very eaſily have choſen for this receſs ſome other unknown place: but his exceeding love to us carried him to the very place which his betrayer was acquainted with. Thus did he go, like a harmleſs lamb to the ſlaughter, to meet his unrelenting murderers. Here the following obſervations naturally offer themſelves.

1. It is alſo one of the chief points of Chriſt's ſufferings, that one of his intimate friends, who had eaten of his bread, lifted up his heel againſt him. As the prophecies were fulfilled (*q*) in this circumſtance, ſo the juſtice of retaliation eminently ſhews itſelf. Our firſt unhappy fall was preceded by the moſt flagitious perfidy; as man, the intimate friend and gueſt of God, violated his fidelity and allegiance to his indulgent Creator. This is implied in every wilful ſin, God being thereby trampled under foot by thoſe miſcreants who every day eat his bread. To atone for this, the bleſſed Jeſus permitted ſuch an afflictive incident to happen to him,

(*q*) Pſalm xli. 10. and lv. 14.

which,

which, we have reaſon to conclude, gave occaſion to many ſevere and opprobrious reflexions from his inveterate enemies. Now it may be ſeen, ſaid they, what manner of perſon this Jeſus of Nazareth is; his very diſciples and followers come and offer him to ſale. But this incident is ſtill not unfrequent in the church of God, where his faithful ſervants and dear children are often betrayed by thoſe, whom they have treated with the greateſt confidence and affection. However, he has ſanctified this calamity in the ſacred perſon of Chriſt. But we may here juſtly ſay, 'Woe to him by whom Chriſt 'is betrayed' in his members.

2. One ſingle ſin, when deeply rooted in the heart, may be productive of many other heinous crimes. Judas was extremely covetous. This induced him to be continually embezzling and concealing part of what he received (*r*). This, by long practice, became a habit; by which the love of money increaſed to ſuch a degree in him, that at laſt he ſold his Lord and Maſter for an inconſiderable ſum. Oh, that by this deteſtable example we may be rendered wiſe and cautious! Satan does not always make uſe of ſeven cords to bind a ſoul (*s*) for deſtruction. One alone is ſufficient for his purpoſe. The bulk of mankind unhappily ſuppoſe, that if they do not live in all the works of the fleſh, they are ſafe; though they indulge a ſmall

(*r*) John xii. 6. (*s*) Judges xvi. 8.

favourite

favourite ſin, which they think cannot be of much conſequence. Alas! Judas, to his unſpeakable grief, found the contrary to be true. All the ſins recorded of him are avarice and theft; but theſe coſt him his life and eternal ſalvation.

This was the chain in which Satan bound the unhappy Judas: One he intangles with the ſnare of intemperance, another he captivates with ambition, a third with voluptuouſneſs and ſecret impurity, *&c.* but he leads them all to utter ruin and perdition, unleſs a ſincere converſion and repentance intervenes. This ſhould animate us to caſt off the chains of the devil, and to proſtrate ourſelves at the feet of the bleſſed Jeſus, with prayer and interceſſion, that he would looſe the bonds of ſin, before 'we are faſt bound in miſery and iron.'

3. The Lord Jeſus hath alſo ſanctified this kind of ſuffering which his children are expoſed to, when their religious private aſſemblies are known to treacherous perſons. Here our Lord was to permit, that the place to which he reſorted ſhould be known to Judas, and by his means, to the chief Prieſts and the Scribes. It is not improbable that his enemies thus reaſoned among themſelves, "Who knows what "dangerous plot this Jeſus may be contriving "there with his diſciples; ſome inſurrection or "revolt may be ripe for execution. It is high "time to put a ſtop to thoſe clandeſtine meet-"ings." Such undeſerved ſuſpicions did the Lord

Lord Jeſus, for the benefit of his dear children, ſubmit to; and was contented, that the place of his aſſembling with his diſciples ſhould be known to his perfidious betrayer. This ſpecies of ſuffering often occurs in the hiſtory of David, who, in his ſufferings and diſtreſſes, was a true type of our Saviour. When he thought himſelf quite ſafe at Nob, he was betrayed by the inſidious Doeg (*t*). When he lay concealed on mount Hachilah, the treacherous Zephites diſcovered him to Saul (*u*), ſo that he wiſhes for 'the wings of a dove, that he might fly 'away and be at reſt (*w*);' being every where ſold, ejected, and betrayed. Now, to a Chriſtian, it is a great conſolation under ſuch ſufferings, that this was the caſe even with his Lord and Maſter.

II.

Here alſo are ſpecified the companions, who attended our bleſſed Saviour to his place of combat. Jeſus, indeed, was the chief perſon in this tranſaction; and of him it is alſo expreſly ſaid, (*x*) 'Then cometh Jeſus,' the ſupreme 'meſſenger of the heavenly father. He comes himſelf; does not ſend an angel or any of his followers in his ſtead: for, in the affair in queſtion; no created Being could ſupply his place, and fulfil the arduous taſk. He himſelf appears in his own adorable perſon, and fulfils

(*t*) 1 Sam. xxii. 9. (*u*) 1 Sam. xxvi. 1. Pſalm liv. 2.
(*w*) Pſalm lv. 6. (*x*) Matth. xxvi. 36.

the

the word which had long ſince been ſpoken by the mouth of David, 'Lo, I come, oh my God, 'to do thy will (*y*)!' But it is very obſervable, that St. Matthew deſcribes this important tranſaction as if he ſtill ſaw him preſent before his eyes, 'Then cometh Jeſus *,' as he formerly, almoſt in the ſame manner, deſcribed his coming to baptiſm, which was a type of his ſuffering, 'Then cometh Jeſus to John, *&c.* (*z*)†. This circumſtance affords us the following conſiderations:

1. The actions of our Saviour, particularly his proceſſion to his ignominious death, ſhould always be preſent before our eyes. We ſhould never be tired of reflecting on the ſufferings of Chriſt as a ſtory of little conſequence; but ſhould continually find new ſtrength, comfort, courage, and incitements to our duty, in all the weary ſteps which his bleſſed feet have trod for our ſalvation. How is it poſſible that we can commit any wilful ſin, if we continually ſet before our eyes Chriſt's mournful progreſs to a painful, accurſed death.

2. In our meditation on the whole hiſtory of the paſſion, our eyes muſt be continually fixed on Jeſus as the principal figure in the repreſentation. In this paſſage many perſons are concerned, every one of whom acts with propriety his reſpective part; but amidſt the groupe, we

(*y*) Pſalm xl. 8, 9.
* τοτε ἐρχεται ὁ Ιησους.
(*z*) Chap. iii. 13.
† τοτε παραγινεται Ιησους.

are

are never to loſe ſight of Jeſus. When we come to make a faithful application of the ſufferings of Chriſt, Judas and the high-prieſt, Herod and Pontius Pilate, muſt be in a manner loſt to us; ſo that, like the diſciples at the transfiguration of our Lord, we may have our Lord and Saviour alone in view (*a*). However, though Jeſus be the chief of thoſe who come into this garden, yet is he attended by the ſmall company of diſciples. It is true they go with him, but it is only as witneſſes and ſpectators of his ſufferings. They are only to obſerve the ſevere agonies of his ſoul, that they may with the greateſt certainty and confidence be witneſſes of his ſufferings. How wide the difference here between the Leader and his companions! Chriſt went voluntarily into the garden in obedience to his almighty Father, out of love and tenderneſs to mankind, animated with a divine ſtrength to overcome his ſufferings. His diſciples were all weakneſs, drowſineſs, and torpitude, and fluctuating betwixt temerity and fear; ſo that ſuch companions were rather a burden than an alleviation to his ſorrow. However, they were to accompany their Lord; though no calamity was to befall them at that time. Hence we may learn,

1. That God gradually enures his children who are weak to the croſs; and frequently lets them ſee, for a time, the conflicts of others, before they themſelves are ſtationed in the field of

(*a*) Matthew xvii. 8.

battle. So tenderly does the Lord Jeſus deal with weak and feeble ſouls, and ſo wiſely does he proportion the load to their ſtrength; for he requires not of them any more than they can bear. May this conſideration ſink deep into the minds of thoſe whom a dread of the Croſs keeps aloof from true ſpirit of Chriſtianity! But happy is he, who makes a right uſe of ſuch preludes in the aſcetic ſchool of our Lord's ſufferings; and ſo attends to the fidelity and end of other Chriſtian champions as to follow their faith (*b*), that when he is called upon, he may alſo be ready to fight the good fight, and come off with conqueſt and renown (*c*).

2. In following the Lord Jeſus, we are to fit and prepare ourſelves for a participation of his ſufferings. This is pointed out to us by the Holy Ghoſt in theſe words, 'cometh Jeſus 'with his diſciples.' When we acknowledge Chriſt, and what he has ſuffered for us, our reſolution muſt be, 'Let us alſo go that we 'may die with him (*d*)!' Therefore we are not to be backward or unwilling when our maſter ſhall lead us to the mount of Olives. We muſt follow the lamb of God whereſoever he goeth. If we would be his true diſciples, we muſt prepare ourſelves in his ſchool for ſuch difficult leſſons, and, with St. *Paul*, 'deſire to know 'him—and the fellowſhip of his ſufferings, that 'we may be conformable to his death (*e*).'

(*b*) Heb. xiii. 7. (*c*) 1 Timothy, i. 6, 12. 2 Tim. iii. 10, 11.
(*d*) John xi. 16. (*e*) Philippians iii. 10.

THE PRAYER.

OH moſt faithful Saviour! all praiſe be to thee for thine infinite love, which induced thee, in thine own glorious and adorable perſon, to undergo that painful progreſs on which our redemption depends; and to retire to the garden of Gethſemanè, there to expiate the ſins which we, by our firſt parent, Adam, had committed in the garden of Eden. Grant us grace, that this thy bloody and agonizing walk may ever be freſh and recent in our minds. Be pleaſed to inſpire us with a willingneſs to go with thee wherever thou leadeſt the way. Preſerve us evermore from ſuch a temper as, is aſhamed of the ignominy of thy Croſs. If our fleſh ſhould prove weak and reluctant, draw it after thee with the gentle cords of thy love, that we may not remain behind nor loiter in the thorny way to reſt, which lies through ſorrows and ſufferings. Be alſo one day our guide through the gloomy vale of death, and animate and ſupport us at our laſt place of combat. Grant that we may acquit ourſelves courageouſly, and preſs forward to thee through life and death. Be ever merciful and propitious to us, O Lord. Amen.

CONSIDERATION II.

CHRIST's *firſt addreſs to his diſciples.*

'AND when he was come into the gar-
'den, he ſaid to his diſciples, Sit ye here,
'while I go and pray yonder. Pray, that ye
'enter not into temptation (*f*).

Theſe words exhibit to us two circumſtances:

Firſt, The preſence of Chriſt at the place of conflict.

Secondly, His diſcourſe to his diſciples.

I.

The preſence of Chriſt on his place of tryal and conflict is deſcribed by St. Luke in theſe remarkable words, 'When he was at the place*:' i. e. when he was as one arrived at the place of combat.

In the former conſideration is ſhewn only, that Jeſus was come with his diſciples into the garden; but now he is actually in it: he is now on the ſpot where, by his Father's appointment, the Son was to drink of the cup of mental agony. Here ſomething extraordinary was to be exhibited: the Son of Man was here to become a worm, the Creator to be lower than the creature, and the ſource of all conſolation to be exhauſted of every comfort. The amazing change, which this glorious perſon was to un-

(*f*) Matthew xxvi. 36. Mark xiv. 32. Luke xxii. 40.

* Γενομενος δε επι τυ τοπυ.

dergo, is moſt emphatically expreſſed in the Greek original: ' (*g*) And being in an agony *. It was that we might no longer be what we were before, namely, ſinners, rebels, enemies of God, and children of wrath, that Chriſt ſuffered this. It was in our ſtead he became a victim; in our ſtead trod the dreary path of grief and anguiſh, that we might tread the place of joy, triumph, and exultation. Hence we may learn the following particulars.

1. A true follower of Jeſus Chriſt muſt not draw back from any place, which Heaven has appointed for the ſcene of his ſufferings. Our bleſſed Lord did not only go to the place, but voluntarily preſented himſelf there. He did not attempt to make his eſcape, nor withdraw himſelf from his heavenly Father's determination: But, as he formerly had permitted himſelf to be led by the Holy Spirit into the wilderneſs to be tempted of the Devil; ſo here he ſuffers himſelf to be led to the Mount of Olives, in order to enter on the deciſſive encounter with this prince of darkneſs. He now calls to us, as Gideon did to his men, ' Look ' on me, and do likewiſe (*b*)!' When the providence of God is pleaſed to lead us to any place appointed for our ſufferings, we are not to heſitate, or refuſe to preſent ourſelves there; for it is ſaid in Scripture, ' If any man draw

(*g*) Luke xxii. 44. * Γενομενος εν αγωνια. Compare Gal. iii. 13. iv. 4. Phil. ii. 7, 8. (*b*) Judges vii. 17.

'back, or deſert, my ſoul has no pleaſure in 'him *(i)*.'

2. We are to enter on the place of our ſufferings with a willing reſignation, free from all backwardneſs or repugnancy. This is alſo ſet forth in the energy of the Greek word. It is not ſaid, that he was dragged by force to the place; but it denotes a ſpontaneous voluntary motion *. O bleſſed Saviour! Had all the world exerted their combined ſtrength, they could not, by force, have drawn thee to this place; it was thine unſpeakable love alone that brought thee to Gethſemanè. With us, alas! it is quite otherwiſe; as it is ſaid, 'Another 'ſhall carry thee whither thou wouldeſt not (*k*).' Fleſh and blood naturally ſtarts back at a place of ſuffering. But as by thy willingneſs thou haſt atoned for our reluctancy; may thy example, O bleſſed Jeſus, impart to us ſtrength and power joyfully to overcome any ſuch unwillingneſs to ſuffer for thy ſake.

II.

In our Saviour's words to his diſciples it is very obſervable, that his firſt care is about them, before he takes the leaſt thought about his own particular concerns. The care of his poor flock lay neareſt the good Shepherd's heart; and 'having loved his own, he loved them to the 'end.' As the High Prieſt, in the Old Teſtament, bore the names of the twelve tribes of

(i) Heb. x. 38. * ἐρχεται ſays St. Matt. ἐπορευθη ſays St. Luke. *W.* *(k)* John xxi. 18.

Iſrael on his breaſt-plate when he entered into the Holy of Holies, on the great day of atonement; ſo this faithful High Prieſt, the Chief of the ſpiritual Iſrael, bore his diſciples, as it were, in his heart, when he was going to preſent his ſupplications in the ſanctuary of God.

Theſe words of Chriſt contain, *firſt*, an account of what he himſelf was going to do; and *ſecondly*, what he wouid have his diſciples do at this great criſis.

Of the former he ſays, 'whilſt I go, and pray yonder.' He intends to withdraw from them, and pray. As it was, at other times, his cuſtom to pray alone, ſo likewiſe now he was going to pour out his ſupplications to his Father, in private. It was but fit, that the moſt important event which ever came to paſs ſhould begin with prayer. When King David, one of the moſt expreſs types of Chriſt, in his flight from Abſalom, was to paſs over this ſame Mount of Olives, it is ſaid, 'When David was come to 'the top of the mount, he worſhipped God (*l*).' For, from that eminence he could have a ſight of the ark of the covenant, over which the preſence of the Lord of Hoſts reſted, returning to the city. On the ſame Mount of Olives the Lord and Son of David likewiſe offers his prayers; but inſtead of the ſummit of the hill, he chooſes the deepeſt valley at the foot of it, as the caſe required the moſt extraordinary humiliation and debaſement.

(*l*) 2 Sam. xv. 32.

The

The Holy Ghoſt had before cauſed it to be written concerning the Meſſiah by the pen of David, that in his moſt bitter ſufferings he would caſt the anchor of his hope in God's ſanctuary. The book of Pſalms exhibits the agonies of Chriſt under a ſenſe of the Divine wrath, where it is ſaid 'In my diſtreſs I called upon the Lord, 'and cried unto my God *(m)*.' 'O my God, 'I cry unto thee in the day-time, and in the 'night-ſeaſon, (as it was then night) I am not 'ſilent *(n)*.' My prayer is unto thee, O 'Lord, in an acceptable time *(o)*.' 'But I 'give myſelf unto prayer *(p)*,' or, as it may be more properly rendered, 'I am prayer itſelf *.' *i.e.* All that I do is to recommend my cauſe unto thee in prayer. For though he was come from prayer and converſing with his heavenly father, *(q)* he did not think it an irkſome taſk to be always praying. He ſoon returned to it again; this being, as it were, the element in which his ſoul lived. But this prayer muſt be conſidered in a very different light from that of the beſt who is but mere man. This prayer was not begun merely from a habit of praying; but in this he preſents himſelf before his Father, as the

(m) Pſalm xviii. 6. *(n)* Pſalm xxii. 2. *(o)* Pſ. lxix. 13. *(p)* Pſ. cix. 4.

* ואני תפלה Et ego ſum oratio. *Ad quem locum* ABR. CALOVIUS, *Id eſt, Orationi ſic vaco, omnibúſque viribus oro, ac ſi totus oratio efficerer. Nemo certè mortalium dicere poteſt, ſe totum orationem eſſe, quum nemo tam ſanctus ſit, quin in ipſâ oratione diſtrahatur nonnunquam; tantùm abeſt, ut perpetuò mentem ad Deum elevatam habeat ac directam. Vide Vener.* D. HENR. MICHAELIS notas uberiores in Hagiographa, Vol. I. p. 830.

(q) John xviii. 1. compared with xvii. 1.

oblation for the ſins of the world, and the immaculate lamb of God. This was a part of the ſacerdotal function, and the import of his prayer was; 'Lo! here I am to do thy will, O 'God.' Hence we are to learn as follows.

1. Prayer is the principal and moſt important thing we can ſet about in the hour of temptation. Did Chriſt himſelf in the affliction of his ſoul know of nothing better adapted to the occaſion, or more neceſſary, to which he could betake himſelf? certainly we cannot pretend to find out a better expedient. Prayer is reckoned by St. Paul as part of the ſpiritual panoply which is to be uſed in an evil hour *(r)*. Whoever will venture himſelf among the fiery darts of the wicked without this weapon, will hardly come off without a wound. But alas! it is a frequent error among the children of God to be ſo anxious about human means in their diſtreſs, as utterly to forget this beſt expedient, prayer. Deluded reaſon ſuggeſts, that the Almighty does not himſelf ſtretch out his arm from heaven to this ſublunary world, but makes uſe of men as his inſtruments, for manifeſting his power in ſuccouring the diſtreſſed. Though this concluſion in itſelf be juſt, yet unbelief may ſtretch this propoſition ſo far, as to exclude all prayer and reliance upon God; a fatal rock! which cannot be avoided with too much circumſpection.

2. As public or united prayer has its particular promiſes and bleſſings; ſo perſonal and private

(*r*) Epheſ. vi. 18.

prayer

prayer is ſometimes not leſs neceſſary and beneficial. Chriſt himſelf has afforded us an example, that one muſt not ſupplant the other. He had prayed with his diſciples, and in their preſence *(s)*, and now he is going to pour out his ſupplication alone. We ought therefore to do the one, and not to leave the other undone. It is proper that families ſhould perform their public devotions every morning and evening together; but it is likewiſe highly neceſſary that, beſides this united ſacrifice of prayer, every one in particular ſhould pour out his heart to God in private *(t)*, and with the ſimplicity of a child, converſe with his heavenly Father. Great, indeed, is the advantage of both; but the latter has certainly the leaſt temptation to the practice of hypocriſy.

But, *ſecondly*, our Lord farther ſignifies in the words under conſideration, what he would have his diſciples do at this important criſis.

I. 'Sit ye here,' ſays our bleſſed Lord. At the ſame time, we may ſuppoſe, he pointed to a place, perhaps at the entrance of the garden, where his diſciples were to ſtay till he had done praying. The like circumſtance occurs at the intended ſacrifice of Iſaac (*u*). Theſe words are peculiarly addreſſed to eight of his diſciples, who poſſibly might be the weakeſt, and the leaſt capable of beholding his dreadful agonies. He therefore ſhows a place at a little diſtance, where they were to continue in the mean time; but the other three diſciples he takes along with

(*s*) John xvii. (*t*) Matt. vi. 6. (*u*) Gen. xxii. 5.

him,

him, that they may be nearer his perſon, and witneſſes of his mental ſufferings. Hence the following obſervations naturally ariſe.

1. It is not adviſable for a ſervant of God, when under ſufferings, to lay his heart open indiſcriminately to all. Of this Chriſt himſelf gives us an example, who did not allow all his diſciples to be preſent at his inward agonies, ordering the greater part of them to keep at a diſtance; well knowing, that they might be offended by a nearer view of his unſpeakable anguiſh and agonizing conflict. The children of God, when under ſevere ſufferings, and eſpecially when they are preſſed by violent inward trials and temptations, are often a ſtumbling block, and cauſe many pious ſouls to fall and be offended; ſo that, under ſuch circumſtances, ſome precaution is abſolutely neceſſary, not to diſcloſe inadvertently the ſecret motions and anguiſh of the heart to every by-ſtander.

2. It is a certain ſign, that God well-knows that we are not yet mature for ſufferings, when he allows us to ſtand at a diſtance, and view the ſufferings of others. For a Chriſtian to be exempt from bearing the Croſs is not ſo much a ſign of God's particular favour, as of our own imbecility and weakneſs. If, therefore, we would become worthy to bear the glorious 'marks of the 'Lord Jeſus,' we muſt be diligent in the uſe of thoſe means that will ſupport and comfort us under temptations and ſufferings.

II. In the next place, our Lord ſays, 'Pray 'that ye enter not into temptation.' Chriſt would not

not have them be idle or fall aſleep in the mean time; but that they ſhould join in prayer with him though abſent. He directs them to pray, that their prayers might be to them a fence againſt the approaching temptation. Prayer is the moſt effectual preſervative againſt temptation. It is the breaſt-work whither we muſt betake ourſelves at the approach of temptations and trials. Hence we learn the following doctrines.

1. Under trouble and afflictions we are not to eſtrange ourſelves, and, as it were, withdraw from God; but, on the contrary, we ſhould approach nearer to the throne of grace. They, who attend to the ſecret movements in their ſouls, muſt have obſerved, that in the critical time of trouble the tempter chiefly endeavours to divert us from prayer; ſo that even good men are too apt to neglect it *. But their conſcience afterwards ſtings them with remorſe, and the tempter himſelf reproaches them for this neglect. The devil is a dangerous enemy, ſeducing the human mind even under a myſtic appearance; eſpecially in thoſe who, inſtead of reſiſting his impious ſuggeſtions, let him uſe his utmoſt efforts, and unconcernedly wait the iſſue. He is a ſubtile fiend under which the dull, ſluggiſh fleſh eaſily lurks. Therefore when preſſing troubles, and the unwilling fleſh, would deter us from the

* *Quidam in eo errore ſunt, ut ſatis eſſe putent, ſi de calamitatibus ſuis cogitent. Orationem autem, ſeu recitationem certorum verborum, putant otioſam & ſuper-vacaneam. Statuamus igitur invocationem illam mandatam* (Pſal. l. 15.) *quæ ore fit, nec carere certo ſuo fructu, quum mandata, & ab ipſo filio Dei uſurpata ſit.* LUTHER. Tom. IV. Witteb, Lat. f. 487. a.

duty

duty of prayer, we ſhould enter upon it, as it were by force, and thus by prayer clear our way through all diſſipations, difficulties, and temptations.

2. Chriſt's interceſſion, and that of other believers, does not exempt us from the duty of perſonal prayer. Chriſt prays for his diſciples; yet does he enjoin them to pray for themſelves likewiſe. When others pray for us, they are to pour forth their ſupplications with ſuch zeal and fervour, as if we did not pray at all; and when we pray ourſelves, our petitions ſhould be offered up with ſo much earneſtneſs as if no other perſon prayed for us, and the weight of the duty reſted on ourſelves alone. Simon Magus, indeed, had recourſe to the interceſſions of others, that he might not embarraſs himſelf with prayer (*x*); but his example is by no means worthy of our imitation.

3. Prayer is not to be deferred till the temptation has actually overtaken us, but muſt be uſed as a preſervative to award it off. This is alſo one of Satan's devices, to reduce us to a careleſs ſecurity before temptation, and to render us cold and lifeleſs in the duty of prayer when we are under the preſſure of it. If he can thus bind our feeble hands, he is ſure to carry his point. Let us therefore by no means neglect to pray, till the temptation has actually beſet us; but at the firſt approach of it be vigilant and upon our guard, and arm ourſelves with prayer againſt its attacks. In the hour of temp-

(*x*) Acts viii. 24.

tation

tation we ſhould ſet before our eyes the bleſſed Jeſus praying moſt fervently, and from his illuſtrious example we ſhall, at the ſame time, derive new reſolution and inward ſtrength.

THE PRAYER.

O Moſt faithful Saviour! unfeigned thanſgiving and endleſs praiſe be aſcribed to thee, that by thy prayer, as High Prieſt, thou haſt ſanctified prayer, and haſt imparted to it an efficacy whereby we ſhall be able to overcome the aſſaults of our ſpiritual enemy. Grant that thy holy Spirit may powerfully incite us to prayer when the evil hour approaches, that we may not be indolent in arming ourſelves with this powerful weapon, when the enemy is preparing to make an effort on our ſouls. And do thou, bleſſed Jeſus, come to our aſſiſtance with thy prevailing interceſſion, that our weak imperfect prayer may be ſanctified, and rendered acceptable to thy Father, for the ſake of thy love. Amen.

CONSIDERATION III.

The beginning of CHRIST'S *ſorrowful anguiſh.*

'(y) AND he took with him Peter, and the 'two ſons of Zebedee, James and 'John, and began to be ſorrowful, ſore amazed,

(y) Matth. xxvi. 37, 38. Mark xiv. 33, 34.

'and

'and very heavy. And Jeſus ſaid unto them, 'My ſoul is exceeding ſorrowful even unto death; 'tarry ye here, and watch with me.'

Theſe words repreſent to us the ſorrow and anguiſh of our Lord Jeſus; in which we may obſerve,

Firſt, The ſpectators who were preſent, and

Secondly, The intenſeneſs and violence of his ſorrow.

I.

The ſpectators of the ſorrow and anguiſh of our bleſſed Saviour were Peter, James, and John, three of the principal of his diſciples. The firſt was Peter, who before had ſhewed ſuch intrepidity, and had, as it were, obtruded himſelf on our bleſſed Saviour, and ſet himſelf above all the reſt of his diſciples, ſaying, 'Lord I am ready to go with thee both 'into priſon and to death; though all ſhall be 'offended becauſe of thee, yet will not I;' accordingly now the trial approaches; he muſt be preſent at this extraordinary tranſaction. Here, amidſt theſe perturbations and agonies of our bleſſed Lord, he had an opportunity of approving his courage and reſolution. Hence St. Peter, in a particular manner, ſtiles himſelf 'a witneſs 'of the ſufferings of Chriſt (z).' After him follow James and John, who are not here called the ſons of Zebedee without deſign; for by this appellation we are referred to Matt. xx. 22, where Chriſt puts this queſtion to them, 'Are ye able 'to drink of the cup which I ſhall drink of?' they readily anſwered 'we are able.' Here,

(z) 1 Peter v. 1.

there-

therefore, they had an opportunity of giving a proof of their boaſted fortitude; in which however they were far from acquitting themſelves with honour.

Now theſe three diſciples the bleſſed Jeſus took with him. The reſt were to remain at a diſtance, perhaps at the entrance of the garden; but theſe were permitted to attend him, not only that they might be witneſſes of his agony, (the law of Moſes requiring two or three witneſſes to the confirmation of a fact) but poſſibly, that under his unſpeakable anguiſh of ſoul he might receive ſome little comfort by converſing with them. The other diſciples were alſo in ſight; but not ſo near his ſacred perſon. The knowledge of the tranſaction was not concealed from them; there was only ſome difference in the degrees of this knowledge. Our bleſſed Lord knew them to be as yet too weak to ſupport a nearer view of his dreadful conflict with death; whereas he probably endued theſe three with a greater portion of ſtrength and grace. We are certain from the evangelic hiſtory, that in particular circumſtances he had theſe three diſciples near his perſon; as when he raiſed Jairus's daughter to life (*a*), and at his transfiguration on the holy mountain (*b*). As they had then ſeen the majeſty of Chriſt diſplayed in its greateſt glory whilſt in the days of his fleſh, ſo they were to be witneſſes of his loweſt abaſement and humiliation. Hence may be deduced the following doctrines:

(*a*) Luke viii. 51. (*b*) Matth. xvii. 1.

1. The

1. The divine Wiſdom uſually diſtinguiſhes not only the ſtrong from the weak, but likewiſe the feebler from the weakeſt chriſtian, and proportions the temptation to their reſpective degrees of ſtrength. This wiſe and gracious diſtinction our bleſſed Saviour obſerves in the inſtance before us. The diſciples, who followed him, were a poor, weak, illiterate ſet of men; and yet among theſe ſome were weaker than others. The weakeſt of all he ſtations at a greater diſtance from him; and thoſe who were ſomething ſtronger, he takes along with him, and, in ſome meaſure, admits them to a fellowſhip of his ſufferings. It is ſaid, 'He will not 'ſuffer us to be tempted above what we are 'able (*c*).' This oeconomy he alone underſtands, who ſearches the heart, and tries the ſtrength of every individual; and therefore we are to acquieſce in his dealings, without any expoſtulation, or ſaying with Peter 'Lord but 'what ſhall this man ſuffer (*d*) *?' Otherwiſe we ſhall have the like anſwer, 'What is that 'to thee? follow thou me.'

2. In ſevere trials and temptations it is by no means adviſable to rely too much on our own ſtrength, or to be fond of ſolitude. Chriſt did not ſtand in any need of his diſciples on his own account. However, by taking ſome of them to be near him, as a kind of relief under the preſſure of his ſufferings, he intended, by his own

(*c*) 1 Cor. x. 13. (*d*) John xxi. 21.

* What ſhall this man do? ſays the Engliſh tranſlation. The verb is not expreſſed in the original Greek οὗτος δὲ τί; *W.*

divine

divine example, to introduce and ſanctify this means of relief by ſociety in diſtreſs. Therefore they judge amiſs who, under ſevere temptations, are too fond of ſolitude; will rely on their own ſtrength only; and ſlight the diſcourſe, conſolation, and prayers of other pious men. By ſuch a proceeding they may precipitate themſelves into ſtill greater dangers; and to ſuch may be applied the paſſage in Eccleſiaſtes (*e*), 'Two are better 'than one; for if they fall, the one will lift up 'his fellow: but woe to him that is alone when 'he falleth; for he hath not another to help 'him up. One may prevail againſt him, but 'two ſhall withſtand, *&c.*' Our ſpiritual enemy had rather encounter one ſingle perſon alone, and can more eaſily overcome him; whereas a number of good men, though weak, may, by their united prayers, and faith, more eaſily reſiſt his attempts.

3. The greateſt and ſevereſt ſpiritual trials happen either to thoſe whom God has already highly favoured, or to ſuch as he intends to employ on ſome important occaſion. Theſe three Apoſtles had been with Chriſt on the holy mount before they attended him to the Mount of Olives. They are called Pillars (*f*); and were afterwards employed in extraordinary tranſactions. Peter was the firſt who opened the doors of the kingdom of heaven to the Jews and Gentiles (*g*). James was the firſt of all the Apoſtles who ſealed the truth of the doctrine

(*e*) Chap. iv. 9, 10, 12. (*f*) Gal. ii. 9. (*g*) Acts ii. and x.

of Chriſt with his blood (*h*)*. On the other hand, St. John was to ſurvive all the diſciples, and be favoured with ſublimer revelations of the ſtate of the church of God to the end of the world. Theſe diſciples, therefore, were admitted to a nearer view, a more intimate knowledge of their Maſter's mental agonies than the reſt of their brethren. This is a method which the Divine Wiſdom has always obſerved in its proceedings. Abraham was appointed by God to be the Father of the Faithful; but at the ſame time, that patriarch paſſed through ſuch trials, as, in the judgment of Luther, not one of his deſcendants would have been able to bear. Paul was moſt eminently diſtinguiſhed and bleſſed in his apoſtolic office; but he alſo laboured and ſuffered more than all the other Apoſtles. In like manner Luther was prepared for the important work of the Reformation by great and arduous trials. Could we, without labour or conflict, attain to ſuch a high pitch of holineſs, and be made ſuch illuſtrious inſtruments in the hands of God, moſt of us would willingly be admitted to ſuch a degree of Divine favour; but ſuch a ſignal favour of God is dealt only to ſuch as he has tried and approved.

II.

The vehemence of the internal ſorrow and anguiſh of our bleſſed Lord, as deſcribed by the

* He is ſuppoſed to have ſuffered martyrdom in the fourth year of Claudius, and the forty-fourth of the vulgar Æra. Vid. *Pearſon Annal. Paulini.* *W.*

(*h*) Acts xii.

Evangeliſts,

Evangeliſts, was ſuch, that he both felt it inwardly, and likewiſe diſcovered it by his words.

1. That he felt it inwardly appears from theſe words, 'And he began to be ſorrowful, ſore 'amazed, and very heavy.' Theſe expreſſions firſt teach us, that the bleſſed Jeſus voluntarily endured his agony. 'He began to be ſorrow-'ful,' which words denote a ſpontaneous action. This is not a mere Greek phraſe, according to which, the words, 'he began to be ſorrowful', may likewiſe import he grew ſorrowful. In this moſt remarkable hiſtory, the Holy Spirit has not inſpired a ſingle expreſſion without deſign. By this expreſſion is rather ſignified that Chriſt, in taking on himſelf this ſorrow, not raſhly but deliberately and willingly, gave himſelf up to the Divine juſtice; for in the whole tranſaction he acknowledged his Father acting as judge. The expreſſion 'he began' occurs long before, (*i*) 'From that time Jeſus began to ſhow 'to his diſciples, how he muſt go up to Jeruſa-'lem and ſuffer many things,' *&c.* Now as the words 'he began to be ſorrowful' include both an active and paſſive ſenſe *; ſo through every part of our Saviour's paſſion, both active and paſſive obedience are always connected.

The ſorrow of the bleſſed Jeſus is further repreſented as very bitter and vehement. The Evangeliſts uſe different phraſes to expreſs the anguiſh of his ſoul: 'He began to be over-'whelmed with ſorrow †; to be ſore amazed; 'to be troubled and ſeized with fear and

(*i*) Matt. xvi. 21. * ἠρξατο λυπεισθαι. † Λυπεισθαι.

'dread *;' as it is ſaid of St. Paul when frightened by a ſudden flaſh of lightning, he ſpoke trembling and aſtoniſhed (*k*), and likewiſe of the women when ſurpriſed by the appearance of an angel at the ſepulchre (*l*). 'He began to be ſore 'amazed,' which word in the original denotes the moſt painful anguiſh of ſoul and depreſſion of ſpirit †. Thus we ſee how attentive the Evangeliſts were in ſearching out the moſt expreſſive words to deſcribe, in ſome faint manner, this vehement agony of his mind. For as man, in whoſe ſtead this ſacred perſon offered himſelf, conſiſts of ſoul and body, the repreſentative was likewiſe to ſuffer in ſoul and body. Theſe words are illuſtrated at large in the paſſion-Pſalms, where the anguiſh of Chriſt is very pathetically repreſented (*m*). Moreover it is alſo mentioned by the Evangeliſts that,

2. He diſcovered this anguiſh by his words, 'And Jeſus ſaid unto them, my ſoul is exceeding 'ſorrowful even unto death; tarry ye here, and 'watch with me.' By this our bleſſed Lord intimates two things.

Firſt, he ſignifies what had already befallen him. This is a very remarkable circumſtance, that Chriſt informs his diſciples of his agonizing condition. Had he here been as a mute lamb, we ſhould never had any knowledge of this myſtery. It is he himſelf who makes known

* ἐχθαμβεισθαι Compare Phil. ii. 26. (*k*) Acts ix. 6. (*l*) Mark xvi. 5. † ἀδημονειν. i. e. ἀγωνιαν, Heſych. (*m*) Pſalm xviii. 5, 6, 8. Pſal. xl. 13. Pſ. lxix. 2, 3, 15, 16. Pſ. lxxxviii. 4, 5, 8, 16, 17, 18.

his

his ſorrow; which was not only to come to paſs, but likewiſe to be declared to us. The firſt belongs to the merit of Chriſt, the ſecond gives us grounds for appropriating his merit to ourſelves, without which there is no ſalvation for us. Thus Chriſt here ſhews himſelf both prieſt and prophet; and at the ſame time that he acquires the merit, he alſo provides for the appropriation of that merit to mankind, to which the way is prepared by declaring it to his diſciples. Admirable diſplay of infinite love and conſummate wiſdom!

But what does he ſay to his diſciples? 'My 'ſoul is ſorrowful, even unto death.' The chief ſeat of his agony was his ſoul, which was ſubject to the like paſſions with ours. His ſoul was now, as it were, hemmed in with ſorrow, like a city cloſely beſieged and preſſed on all ſides by the enemy; as the Meſſiah is introduced pouring forth his complaints in theſe words: *(n)* 'Innumerable evils have com-'paſſed me about.' And this ſorrow was 'unto 'death,' that is, it was ſo great that it might have broken his heart, and thus have brought on his death; or becauſe it would not ceaſe till death put an end to it. Thus here he already felt the whole weight of it. Whatever is meant by death here ruſhed at once on the bleſſed Jeſus; for the ſoul may ſuffer more in an inſtant, than the body in a long ſucceſſion of many years.

(m) Pſalm xl. 12.

Secondly, He makes known what he requires of the diſciples, 'tarry here, and watch with me.' He does not require them to be ſorrowful, amazed, and heavy; but only to ſtay and watch with him, that they might be witneſſes of his agony, and prepare and arm themſelves againſt the trial which was alſo coming on them. By this he manifeſted their frailty; and by this mournful ſpectacle, the pride of relying on their natural ſtrength was mortified. Hence let us learn:

That Chriſt in the internal ſufferings of his ſoul is to be conſidered as bearing the ſins of the whole world, and the wrath of God in our ſtead. This is the principal doctrine inculcated by this terrible circumſtance, without which all the myſtical and moral ſpeculations which the moſt ſubtile geniuscan produce will be of no avail. Our eyes muſt therefore be enlightened by the Holy Spirit, that we may view Chriſt in his ſorrows as 'the lamb of God which taketh away the 'ſins of the world *(o)*.' Other martyrs have gone chearfully to tortures and death; whence then ariſes ſuch ſorrow and trembling here? Is the chief of all martyrs more timorous and faint-hearted than they? Is he afraid of the ſcourge, of contumely, or of death? God forbid! His fear ariſes from quite another cauſe. He was to ſuffer a death which was not yet diveſted of its ſting; whereas their death had before-hand loſt its ſting in Chriſt. God placed him before his judgment ſeat, and cauſed him to feel that

(o) John i. 29.

dreadful

dreadful wrath which burns to the loweſt parts of hell. If a malefactor, ſentenced to a temporal death, is often almoſt diſtracted with fear; let it be conſidered what terror and conſternation muſt have filled the ſoul of the bleſſed Jeſus, when eternal death was not only adjudged to him inſtead of all mankind, but alſo inflicted on him in the ſevereſt and moſt ſenſible manner. He had now nothing before him but God's awful tribunal, and the horrible imagery of the ſins of the whole world. How does a ſingle ſin oppreſſing the conſcience ſo torment a man, that no place can afford him refuge or peace? And were only the accumulated ſins committed within a great city in the ſpace of one year, to be placed before the eyes of a pious ſoul, with what pungent ſorrow would it not be affected? But here our bleſſed Lord, by the light of his omniſcience, had preſent to his mind the ſins of the whole race of mankind. What grief and anguiſh therefore muſt this diſmal ſpectacle have occaſioned in his ſoul. Now this circumſtance is to be improved,

1. For promoting a ſalutary contrition and ſorrow. Behold, wretched man! thou committeſt innumerable ſins with pleaſure, and the Son of God muſt expiate them with ſuch inexpreſſible pain. Art thou not concerned to cauſe ſuch heavineſs and ſorrow to thy Lord and Saviour? When a criminal is to undergo an uncommon puniſhment, we conclude that he muſt have committed ſome attrocious crime; but our bleſſed Lord has not ſuffered for his own, but our

treſpaſſes. Therefore let the greatneſs of his ſorrow inform thee how horrible ſin muſt be, which could provoke the righteous God to inflict ſuch rigorous puniſhment on his only ſon. What thou ſeeſt him endure here, thou thyſelf oughteſt to have ſuffered. With this anguiſh and ſorrow thou ſhouldeſt have been oppreſſed to all eternity. And, indeed, all this agony, in an eternity of darkneſs and torment, await thoſe ſinners who will not, by faith and repentance, make themſelves partakers of the fruits of Chriſt's ſufferings. Therefore, O ſinner, forbear to heap up treaſures of wrath, which an infinite and omnipotent God will pour upon thee, if by this agony of his ſon thou art not moved to ſorrow and repentance.

2. For promoting a true and lively faith. Behold, thou that haſt a ſincere hatred againſt ſin, here thy ſins lie on the head of that ſacred victim, the Lamb of God. They are included in the heavy load which oppreſſes him. They have no more right in thee; fear not, thou ſhalt never be made to atone for them. God is not unrighteous to demand of thee a debt, which his Son has generouſly diſcharged by his anguiſh and ſorrow. In this mirrour acknowledge thy wickedneſs; acknowlege that thou didſt occaſion this ſorrow to thy Saviour, but acknowledge likewiſe that he acquired for thee a precious oil of gladneſs. By his extreme ſorrow he has gained thee a proportionate, and conſequently the moſt exquiſite, felicity. As thou never wouldeſt have cauſe for one inſtant of joy either

in

in time or eternity, if Chriſt had not endured this for thee; ſo now, not even under the croſs haſt thou occaſion to be ſorrowful for a moment, if thou doeſt but truly ſtand in faith and the grace of God.

3. For promoting a cordial and unfeigned love to the Lord Jeſus. Who will not love him, who, from the free impulſe of his exalted love, underwent ſuch ſorrow and anguiſh for our ſake? The more painful his love towards us has been to him, the more ardent and willing ſhould our love be, to endure all kind of pain for his ſake.

4. For a powerful ſource of comfort under trials and afflictions. O thou tempted and afflicted ſoul, place a ſtrong confidence in thy merciful High Prieſt, who, from experience, knows thy diſtreſs and trouble; and having himſelf felt thy infirmities, he will not only have patience with thee, but alſo knows how to help and ſupport thee. In thy ſorrow and dread of God's judgments there is intermixed a ſinful repining; but he bore his inexpreſſible anguiſh without murmuring or impatience; and by this his blameleſs and undeſerved ſorrow, he has covered the ſpots and blemiſhes of thy ſorrow, that they ſhall not be laid to thy charge at the divine tribunal. Therefore when thou art under anguiſh of mind, ſhelter thyſelf in the ſoul-felt agony of thy Mediator; and be confident that as certainly as he did not ſink under them, but was delivered from ſorrow and judgement, ſo certainly ſhalt thou again lift up thy head,

and

and by his ſorrow ſhalt be entitled to everlaſting joy and tranquility.

THE PRAYER.

ALL praiſe and thankſgiving be rendered to thee, O bleſſed Jeſus, for the anguiſh, ſorrow, and heavineſs with which thy ſoul, hypoſtatically united with the Godhead, did ſubmit to be oppreſſed! Thou art the Power of the Moſt High, and haſt once been overwhelmed with fear, and that only for our good. When the light of thy countenance is withdrawn, all thy creatures are terrified. Thy mighty power has placed us in this world; but thy weakneſs lifts us up to heaven. Let us therefore enjoy the fruits of thy anguiſh and ſorrow, during our whole lives, and particularly at the tremendous hour of death; that then we may walk without fear or dread through the gloomy vale of death, which thou haſt ſanctified with thy bleſſed footſteps. Grant this for the ſake of thy love to mankind. Amen.

CONSIDERATION IV.

Our Saviour's preparation for prayer, when oppreſſed with anguiſh and ſorrow.

'(a) AND he went a little farther, and was withdrawn from them about a ſtone's caſt, and kneeled down, and fell on his face

(a) Matt. xxvi. 39. Mark xiv. 35, 36. Luke xxii. 41.

' to

'to the ground, and prayed, That, if it were 'poſſible, the hour might paſs from him.'

Theſe words exhibit to us our Saviour's preparation for prayer in his agony. In which we may obſerve,

Firſt, his attitude in it;

Secondly, the purport of his prayer.

I.

As to the attitude of our Saviour during his prayer and conflict; it is obſervable, 1. That he withdrew from his diſciples; for it is ſaid 'he 'went a little farther.' At firſt he was in company with his eleven diſciples; afterwards he choſe three of them, whom he took along with him, leaving the reſt behind him. To theſe three he made known the inexpreſſible ſorrow and anguiſh of his ſoul; and now he alſo left theſe at a diſtance, and went farther on in the garden, though but a little way; ſo that they had ſtill a plain view of him, and by the light of the moon, they could diſcern how he was employed. But it is ſoon after ſaid, that 'he 'withdrew from them a ſtone's caſt.' This denotes a ſtill farther removal, in which his deſign was to prevent his diſciples taking any offence at his extreme ſorrow and dread, and that he might the more freely pour out his heart before his heavenly Father. But the Greek word, by which this removal is expreſſed, ſignifies that 'he was carried or ſnatched away from them *,' which exhibits a lively repreſentation of the manner of it, *viz.* that he was ſeized by vehement anguiſh, overpowered, and, as it were,

* ἀπεσπάσθη ἀπ' αὐτῶν.

impelled

impelled forward, as a ſtone is caſt by force ſome paces before one. This privacy ſuited our bleſſed Lord's preſent ſituation, as he now was pleading with his heavenly Father. The ſupreme Judge, and the greateſt ſinner, who conſented that all the tranſgreſſions of the whole world ſhould be laid on him, were now to confer with each other. Now his moſt faithful friends were to ſtay behind; for in this important criſis no created Being could afford him any aſſiſtance.

2. 'He kneeled.' St. Luke ſays 'that he 'kneeled down,' bent his knees down to the ground *, as an altar on which he offered up himſelf to his Father. When the awful majeſty of God diſplays itſelf in righteouſneſs, every knee muſt bow. We find it recorded of other holy perſons in Scripture that they prayed kneeling, as Solomon *(b)*, Ezra (*c*), Paul, *&c.* (*d*). But what is their kneeling in compariſon of this. Solomon was a king, Ezra a prieſt, Paul a prophet or teacher. But he who kneeled here was at once king, prieſt, and prophet. They were duſt and aſhes, and their honour did not ſuffer by their kneeling down in the duſt; but here the Lord of heaven and earth kneeled, to whom 'every knee ſhall bow.'

3. 'He fell on his face to the ground.' Oh, what a ſpectacle is here! The only ſon of the eternal Father lies proſtrate in the duſt. The bread which came down from heaven, and giveth life to the world, now lies on the earth.

* Θεις τα γονατα. (*b*) 2. Chron. vi. 13. (*c*) Ezra ix. 5. (*d*) Acts xx. 36.

This is an humble poſture, which ſuits his creatures only. When David *(e)* beſought God for the life of his child, he lay all night on the ground; but here the Son and Lord of David, lying with his face on the ground, exhibits a quite different ſpectacle. The great Judge cannot but relent, when the accuſed humbles himſelf ſo low. Hence it is ſaid, 'in his humili-'ation, his judgment was taken away *(f)*.' From this external deportment of our Saviour in his prayer we may learn,

1. That the reconciliation of mankind by Chriſt was to be attended with circumſtances quite oppoſite to thoſe, by which our Fall was occaſioned. The Fall was occaſioned by the moſt audacious preſumption; man refuſing to be any longer ſubject to his Creator, or be dependent on him in a blameleſs courſe of obedience: But would at once, as it were, ſcale heaven; and, had it been poſſible, would have dethroned God, before whom the holy angels fall proſtrate on their faces, and have ſeated himſelf in his throne. In the commiſſion of that crime all was arrogance and preſumption: In the expiation of it nothing is ſeen but humiliation and abaſement. When any aſpiring preſumptuous thoughts riſe in us, let us think on the debaſed Jeſus, with his whole body extended on the earth, and humbling himſelf, like an abject worm, before the Divine Juſtice.

2. The inward awe and reverence, with which we ſhould be filled in prayer, muſt alſo

(e) 2 Sam. xii. 16. *(f)* Acts viii. 33.

ſhew

ſhew itſelf outwardly in a reverential poſture. Here the Son of God, whilſt he is pleading our cauſe with his Father, kneels on the ground; why then are our knees ſo ſtiff and inflexible, that they do not bend before the ſupreme Majeſty of heaven, when we are addreſſing ourſelves to God about our own concerns? This, indeed, is not the eſſential part of prayer; yet, where the heart is poſſeſſed with real humility, and reverence for the Supreme Being, it will certainly ſhew itſelf outwardly. Such a one will not appear before God with that boldneſs, nor uſe ſuch a careleſs and unſeemly behaviour as is too common among many; eſpecially perſons of learning and rank, who ſeem to be aſhamed of prayer. Let us not vainly imagine, that the innocent Lamb of God, by theſe his humble geſtures, has expiated for the proud or indolent poſtures which men, to the diſhonour of God, frequently uſe in prayer.

3. In following Chriſt we may fall into ſuch circumſtances that we muſt, as it were, diſengage ourſelves from all men, as finding no help or comfort in any creature. This was here the caſe of Chriſt himſelf, the Head and Captain of the church militant. Here was fulfilled what he had before ſaid, 'Behold, the hour cometh 'when ye ſhall all be ſcattered, and ſhall leave me 'alone (*g*).' On the mount of glorification (*h*) Jeſus only was ſeen at laſt; Moſes and Elias, after talking with him of the event which he was to fulfil at Jeruſalem, having diſappeared.

(*g*) John xvi. 32. (*h*) Luke ix. 36.

This

This was a type, ſignifying, that in his ſufferings he ſhould be deſtitute of all human comfort. Thus it may ſometime happen, that in following Chriſt we muſt gradually withdraw from our beſt friends, as Chriſt firſt withdraws from the eleven, and afterwards from the three diſciples, and goes away to pray alone. But it appears from theſe words, 'I am not alone; for the Father 'is with me *(i)*,' with whom, in ſuch ſolitary hours we ought to converſe with the greater intimacy.

II.

As to the purport of the prayer, it is ſaid, 'He prayed, That if it were poſſible, this hour 'might paſs from him.'

This expreſſion, 'He prayed,' is often repeated in this hiſtory; as if the Evangeliſts had all agreed to induce us, by the frequent repetition, to take notice of this prayer of the Lord Jeſus. The more his ſorrows preſſed upon him, the more he perſevered in prayer to his Father, and humbled himſelf before the moſt juſt tribunal of God againſt all the accuſations of the enemy. Herein was, as it were, the quinteſſence of prayer. Without this prayer of the Mediator, God would never have accepted of any prayer from ſinners. When our Saviour at the beginning of his miniſtry was tempted by the devil, the laſt and moſt impudent aſſault was made in theſe words: 'All theſe things will I 'give thee, if thou wilt fall down, and worſhip 'me.' But Chriſt, having baffled the audaci-

(*i*) John xvi. 32.

ous

ous enemy with theſe words, 'Thou ſhalt 'worſhip the Lord thy God', the tempter departed from him: but, as St. Luke very remarkably adds, 'It was but for a ſeaſon (*k*).' He now returns again in the gloomy hour of trial, and, without doubt, with his uſual effrontery renews the temptation. But Chriſt, in this inſtance alſo, continues true to his Father, and worſhips God only; and now an angel comes to ſtrengthen him, as, after the former temptation, 'The angels came to miniſter unto 'him.'

But let us now enquire, What was properly the purport of our Saviour's prayer? He prays, 'That, if it were poſſible, this hour might 'paſs from him.' He calls the ſuffering allotted to him, and of which he had already a foretaſte, an Hour (*l*). It had before been ſaid (*m*), 'His hour was not yet come. But now it was come, as our bleſſed Lord himſelf ſays in his prayer, 'Father, the hour is come.' This was indeed an important Hour, ſet apart in the eternal decrees of God for the ſufferings of his Son; an Hour, or time, which the ſpirit in the prophets had long before ſignified (*n*); an Hour which our bleſſed Lord had before his eyes, and expected it as a woman expects the hour of her travail. This word includes likewiſe the whole torrent of ſufferings with which his feeble humanity was to be overwhelmed, as the anguiſh and ſorrow, the inſults, pains, and death

(*k*) Luke iv. 13.
(*l*) John xii. 27. xiii. 1.
(*m*) John vii. 30.
(*n*) 1 Peter i. 11.

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he endured: but it more particularly denotes the preſent hour of his inward agony, his anguiſh of ſoul; when the floods of God's wrath were diſcharged on him; when he ſtood before the Divine tribunal as the greateſt criminal, loaded with the oppreſſive weight of the ſins of the whole world.

Concerning this Hour, he prays, That it might paſs from him. The deſire of being freed from pain, or at leaſt ſome mitigation of it, is indeed in itſelf a natural and blameleſs affection; a ſtate of ſuffering being an adventitious thing for which human nature was not originally created; yet it may eaſily become ſinful in us, by means of Original ſin, which dwelleth in us. But in Chriſt it was pure and unadulterated, he himſelf not being liable to ſuffer but from a voluntary covenant; nor had he the leaſt taint of ſin in himſelf. But our miſeries moved him to it; and he felt the accumulated burden in ſuch an oppreſſive manner, that he would fain try whether he could, in a legal way, obtain ſome alleviation of it. He therefore does not properly petition his Father, That all the ſufferings he was to undergo may paſs from him, as it is commonly expounded; but he means only to obtain, in the preſent hour of extreme inward trouble and anguiſh, an abatement and ſhortening of the dreadful agony he felt, which might have given offence even to his diſciples, who were unacquainted with the myſtery of his ſufferings.

He further adds, 'If it be poſſible;' i. e. If it can be done conſiſtently with the holineſs and juſtice of God, and without breaking into the pre-eſtabliſhed decree of his Father. Such was the purport of our Saviour's prayer, which will be enlarged on in the following Conſideration. In the mean time we may learn from it,

1. That oral prayer is by no means to be neglected or undervalued by Chriſtians. Thoſe perſons, whoſe reaſon would preſcribe to Chriſtianity, ſay, We ought mentally to pray always; and it ſavours of ſuperſtition, to think that we ſtand in need of words to give our prayers utterance, or that we are bound to ſet apart a certain time for that purpoſe. But certainly all theſe idle evaſions are invalidated by the example of Chriſt himſelf. Prayer requires a ſeparation from the buſy world, and ſerious recollection of our ſcattered thoughts; the faculties being diſſipated by too much labour and hurry of buſineſs. It is indeed proper and neceſſary at all times to lift up our hearts to God, and to walk in his ſight; but this does not ſuperſede the uſe of oral prayer, and whoever neglects it will gradually find himſelf eſtranged from God and religion.

2. Chriſtianity does not conſiſt in a ſtoical inſenſibility, but in an humble ſubmiſſion and reſignation to the will of God, under a ſenſe of the burden of afflictions. The world is apt to imagine, that Chriſtians are void of any feeling or ſenſibility; but here we ſee, in the very higheſt example, that 'no chaſtiſement for the

preſent

preſent can be accounted joyous.' The world, when convinced of this, calumniates on the other ſide, and ſays, I thought Chriſtians were ſuch heroes as to deſpiſe ſufferings; but I ſee that when they are touched they murmur and repine like other people. Alas! the preſent burden indeed preſſes hard upon us; however, we are to poſſeſs our ſouls in patience under its oppreſſive weight.

THE PRAYER.

THANKS be to thee, O deareſt Saviour, that thou haſt truly felt our burden, and was tempted in all things as we are, though without ſin. All praiſe be to thee for thy deep humiliation in prayer, by which thou haſt atoned for our pride, and left us a perfect example to follow. Propitiouſly look upon us in the hour of trial; and may we arm ourſelves with prayer, and for the ſake of thy conqueſt be conquerors in all things. Amen.

CONSIDERATION V.

The prayer of Jeſus in his ſorrow and anguiſh of ſoul.

'(*a*) AND he ſaid, Abba, father! all things 'are poſſible unto thee. If it be poſ-'ſible, let this cup paſs from me; nevertheleſs 'not as I will, but as thou wilt.'

(*a*) Matthew xxvi 39. Mark xiv. 36. Luke xxii. 42.

Theſe are the words of our Saviour's prayer in his ſorrow and conflict; in which are to be attentively conſidered, *firſt*, the proem, *ſecondly*, the petition itſelf.

I.

The proem is mentioned by the evangeliſts in the Chaldean and Greek languages. As to the Chaldean appellation, it is to be obſerved,

1. That the word Abba in the Chaldean tranſlation of the Old Teſtament is never uſed to denote a civil title of honour and reſpect, but a real and natural father *.

2. That it is particularly uſed by children when they would ſooth their parents, as the very ſound of the word ſeems to imply ſomething tender and endearing: And this expreſſion of love and confidence receives further ſtrength by the addition of the Greek word πατηρ, father. The word Abba had long before been typically uttered by Iſaac, a lively type of Chriſt, when he was going to be ſacrificed by his Father (*b*)‡. But here it is repeated a ſecond time by the great Antitype, who, by twice calling on the name of his Father, manifeſts his filial affection towards him. For though he was like a victim to feel the wrath of God; yet he penetrates through the obſcure, thick cloud, and calls him

* Vox אבא patrem ſolùm naturalem, *immo denotat* Pater meus, *ut* Gen. xxii. 7. xxvii. 34. xlviii. 18. Iſai. viii. 4. *Sic Chriſtus hoc in loco, utcumque ſub agone infando, et circumſeptus undique angoribus, et providentiâ admodum nubilâ, tamen Deum agnoſcit, invocat, invenit* אבא patrem ſuum, *ſenſu ſuaviſſimo.* LIGHTFOOT Hor. Talmud. in Marci xiv. 16.

(*b*) Gen. xxii. 7. ‡ Heb. ויאמר אבי Targ. ואמר אבא his

his Father, and that in a ſenſe too ſublime for any of the ſons of men to repeat it after him; he having in his divine nature derived his origin from the eſſence of the Father by eternal generation, and according to his human nature, obtained the dignity of a Son of God by adoption, in the perſon of the WORD. 'And 'as we are ſons by adoption, God has ſent forth 'the Spirit of his Son in our hearts, crying Abba, 'father (*c*)!'

II.

After the proem, follows the petition itſelf, which conſiſts, *firſt*, of a propoſition, and *ſecondly*, a concluſion. The propoſition is this, 'All 'things are poſſible to thee. If it be poſſible, 'remove this cup from me.' Thus the Lord Jeſus previouſly lays down a fundamental truth, namely, that all things are poſſible to God; which is alſo aſſerted in other paſſages of Scripture. However, there are things which may, in ſome meaſure, be ſaid even to be impoſſible to Almighty God, viz. ſuch as are inconſiſtent with his nature and eſſential attributes, or contrary to his eternal decrees. According to the former, it is impoſſible that God ſhould lye, or break his promiſe (*d*); this being incompatible with his veracity. This inability therefore is by no means to be looked on as an imperfection; for if he was to do this, he would no longer be the moſt perfect Being. As to the latter, it would be contrary to his eternal decree to confer eternal happineſs on an obſtinate ſinner, who

(*c*) Rom. viii. 15. (*d*) Heb. vi. 18.

contemns the means of grace; and conſequently this is alſo impoſſible with God.

The humanity of Chriſt, in its preſent ſtate of the deepeſt humiliation, when the ſenſible influence of the divine Effulgency was for a time withheld, and conſequently when it could not ſo clearly perceive the Divine decrees, not knowing whether the Father had abſolutely determined how long the inward feeling of his wrath ſhould laſt in him; our bleſſed Lord adds, 'If it be poſſible,' if this prayer can be granted without croſſing thy eternal decree, or as St. Luke expreſſes it, 'If thou be willing,' if thy holy will and previous decree admit of it.

After this dutiful reſignation to the will of his Father, he proceeds in theſe words, 'Let this 'cup paſs from me,' according to St. Matthew; or as it ſtands in Mark, or Luke, 'Take or re-'move this cup from me;' which words receive ſome light, from what has already been obſerved in the preceding Conſideration. Theſe are certainly the moſt remarkable and difficult paſſages in this narrative, which exhibit a miracle to our eyes, and what, at the ſame time, muſt fill our hearts with fear and dread. In the illuſtration of theſe words, two cautions are particularly to be obſerved. The one is, that we do not leſſen the ſufferings of Chriſt, or diminiſh any thing from the intenſeneſs and reality of them; and the other, that no ſinful imperfection or unwillingneſs be attributed to the perſon ſuffering. For if the moſt minute criminal wiſhes, or ſinful diſpoſitions, had any place in Chriſt, he would himſelf

himſelf have been ſubject to the law and its curſe; and conſequently could not have freed us from them both. He muſt have been abſolutely without the leaſt taint of wickedneſs, as Adam was in the ſtate of Innocence.

Having previouſly taken notice of this particular, we ſhall now briefly conſider the words themſelves, 'Take this cup from me.' The main point here is the right meaning of the phraſe 'this cup.' It muſt, indeed, be owned, that Chriſt in general calls his whole paſſion a cup (*e*), according to the uſual phraſeology of the ſcripture (*f*); and therefore moſt commentators are of opinion, that Chriſt by this expreſſion is depreciating his whole approaching paſſion, viz. the external part of it, the pains, the croſs, and death itſelf; yet in ſuch a manner, that he immediately recollects himſelf, and acquieſces in the Divine Will. But, *firſt*, this is making Chriſt much inferior to the primitive martyrs; not one of whom is ſuppoſed to have aſked of God to remove his ſufferings. *Secondly*, Chriſt had already foretold to his diſciples the principal parts of his outward ſufferings (*g*), and conſequently had fully reſolved to undergo them. *Thirdly*, The thing which he prays for muſt have been of ſuch a nature that he might conceive it poſſible to be granted; but the removal of all his external ſufferings was abſolutely impoſſible, ſince by that means the whole work of reconciliation muſt have been fruſtrated.

(*e*) Matt. xx. 22. (*f*) Iſaiah li. 17. Jer. xxv. 15. Pſalm lxxv. 9. (*g*) Luke xviii. 22. 23.

Fourthly, It muſt have been a petition in which he was heard (*h*), which cannot be ſaid if he prayed for the removal of all his ſufferings in general. Theſe circumſtances evidently confute the common expoſition of this text.

By the cup therefore is rather to be underſtood the preſent excruciating ſenſe of the wrath of God, and the withdrawing of the ſenſible and comfortable aſſiſtance which, at other times, his human nature uſed to enjoy from the Divine. Hence all the evangeliſts ſubjoin THIS cup. All the other cups of his paſſion he was moſt willing and ready to drink (*i*); but this cup which he now firſt began to taſte, in which were poured the dregs of the wrath and curſe of God, was ſo extremely bitter, that his ſpotleſs and feeble humanity ſhuddered at it.

Hence he cries out 'Let this cup paſs from 'me,' in which words he only prays for the ſhortening of the duration of his painful inward agony; that it might ſoon paſs over; that the dreadful tempeſt of the divine Wrath which raged on his ſoul, whilſt his Father was hid in a pavilion of dark water and thick clouds, and ſent forth his thunder with hail-ſtones and coals of fire (*k*), might ſoon blow over and be huſht. The original word implies a ſpeedy paſſing over *. The great concern of a troubled and afflicted mind is how to clear its way; but in what kind or manner, our bleſſed Lord does not preſcribe

(*h*) Heb. v. 7. (*i*) John xviii. 11. (*k*) Pſal. xviii. 12. 13.

* παρελθετω.

to his Father. Hence we learn the following particulars.

1. That Chriſt in all kinds of conflicts and trials was tempted, though without ſin, that he might have compaſſion on thoſe who are tempted (*l*). This affords a ſure ground of conſolation to a ſoul under temptation. When the mind is depreſſed, the eyes muſt be immovably fixed on the immaculate Lamb of God, who alſo felt theſe afflictions; but preſerved under them a filial confidence in his heavenly Father. Our bleſſed Saviour indeed, permitted the ſtrong motions of the human will to aſſault him; but ſtood immoveable as a rock againſt all its efforts. Now he knows how to bear with his poor diſtreſſed members, and powerfully to ſuccour them in thoſe temptations, with which he himſelf was exerciſed.

2. It is to Chriſt and his meritorious ſufferings that we owe the privilege of being allowed to pray to God for a ſhortening and abatement of our ſufferings. Never can God lay ſo much on us as we deſerve. And as the impatience and diſobedient motions of the will intermix with our ſufferings, we ſhould have had no right in ourſelves to pray to God for ſhortening the duration, or abating the preſſure of them. In order, therefore, to obtain ſuch a privilege for us, an innocent and holy perſon, who of himſelf deſerved no puniſhment, was to preſent himſelf and feel, without ſin, motions inclining to a removal of his ſufferings.

(*l*) Heb. ii. 17. 18.

Secondly,

Secondly, The concluſion of the prayer is, 'Ne-
'vertheleſs not as I will, but as thou wilt.' The Father's Will, and the Will of Jeſus Chriſt are, indeed, different, but by no means oppoſite; as in Chriſt himſelf, the Will of both natures are different, yet ſo that the human Will is in a holy ſubjection to the Divine. This human Will felt in reality the anguiſh, and all the load of the Divine diſpleaſure. And therefore, our bleſſed Saviour ſeems to ſay, The Will of my human nature has, indeed, ſome ſinleſs averſion to ſuffering, (as our firſt parent before the fall would have had, a ſtate of ſuffering being an adventitious circumſtance for which man was not deſigned) particularly at preſent, when the ſenſe of thy wrath preſſeth me ſore; ſo that, if it be conſiſtent with thy Will, I could wiſh to be ſoon delivered from this agonizing ſtate. But if it be thy judicial and paternal Will, that I muſt bear this oppreſſive load of mental ſufferings ſtill longer, and drink of this bitter cup to the laſt drop, I heartily ſubmit my human Will to thy ſentence, and deſire nothing, but 'that thy Will
'may be done.'

This, therefore, determines the iſſue of the whole matter. Here the third petition of the Lord's prayer is truly performed, and conſecrated by the ſacred lips of our Mediator and high Prieſt. It was his deſire that his Father would not judge of him from his preſent ſtate of pain and anguiſh, but according to the thoughts of his heart, in which the law of his Fa-

Father was written (*m*). Under all theſe violent motions, the Will of Chriſt continues pure and innocent, and at length is ſeen to riſe ſuperior to all fear and reluctancy. It is a filial, not a forced ſubmiſſion, accompanied with a confident reliance and reſignation, ſo that his love to the Father remains undiminiſhed. Hence let us learn,

That the ſubmiſſion of the human Will in Chriſt to the Divine is an important article, both of his propitiatory ſacrifice, and of the great example which he has left for our imitation. Chriſt, in this ſacrifice of his holy Will, is chiefly to be conſidered as a Reconciler atoning for our oppoſition to God and his ſacred Will. Alas, how frequent is it, on any contrariety betwixt God's Will and ours, that the former is ſet aſide, and our own Will ſinfully preferred to it. Even the children of God, eſpecially when under temptations and trials, ſtill feel in themſelves the relicts of this deep-rooted evil; ſo that in their Wills they caſt about for ſome ſecret refuge from the judgment of God. Herein is truly ſeen the force of original ſin, diſplaying itſelf in an enmity againſt God and his ways. But this, at the ſame time, convinces us of the neceſſity of a Reconciler, that this inward reſiſtance againſt the judicial Will of God, which were alone ſufficient to condemn us, might be forgiven; and this enmity againſt God is never mortified but by a faithful appropriation of Chriſt's ranſom. When we par-

(*m*) Pſal. xl. 8.

ticipate

ticipate of that bleſſing, the mind is illuminated, and taught to look on God with other eyes; then we learn according to our Saviour's perfect example, to addreſs his Majeſty from our hearts, ſaying, 'Not mine, but thy Will be done.'

THE PRAYER.

TO thee, deareſt Saviour, thou tempted and merciful high Prieſt, all praiſe and thankſgiving be aſcribed, that thou haſt been pleaſed by the holy ſacrifice of thy blameleſs Will to make ſatisfaction for, and expiate our enmity againſt the Will of God; Be pleaſed, O bleſſed Jeſus, by virtue of this thy propitiatory offering, and the influence of thy holy Spirit, to bring our corrupt and unruly Wills to that harmony and order, in which they were at firſt created; ſo that it may be our food and our joy to fulfil the Will of thy Father, and reſign ourſelves entirely to him. Amen.

CONSIDERATION VI.

The firſt temptation of the diſciples.

'(a) AND he cometh to his diſciples, and findeth them aſleep; and he ſaith unto Peter, Simon, ſleepeſt thou? What, could ye not watch with me one hour? Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: The ſpirit, indeed, is willing; but the fleſh is weak.'

(a) Matt. xxvi. 40, 41. Mark xiv. 37, 38.

In

In theſe words is deſcribed Chriſt's firſt coming or viſit to the diſciples; in which we may obſerve, *firſt*, the condition of the viſited, *ſecondly*, the ſpeech of our Lord to his diſciples.

I.

The condition of the viſited is exceedingly wretched, and deſerves pity. It is ſaid, 'He 'came to his diſciples and found them ſleep-'ing'. The perſon viſiting them was the ſuffering and agonizing Jeſus, who now felt within himſelf the effect of God's wrath, and was to plead our cauſe before the awful tribunal of the ſupreme Judge; but in all his agonies, he took care of his poor unthinking flock, that they might not fall into the hands of the tempter. Having accordingly, as it were, poured out his heart into his Father's boſom, and offered up his own will to his; he returns to his three diſciples, Peter, James, and John, from whom he had before removed about the diſtance of a ſtone's caſt, in order to ſee what plight they were in.

But the condition in which he found his diſciples was very improper at ſuch a criſis; he found them ſleeping. It was with them as with the ten fooliſh virgins *(b)*, who, when the bridegroom delayed his coming, all ſlumbered and ſlept. It was indeed late at night, ſo that their eyes were heavy and cloſed; but this was likewiſe owing in ſome meaſure to the tempter, Chriſt having before told them, that ſatan had deſired to ſift them like wheat. How the bleſſed Jeſus muſt have been affected on this occaſion when his

(*b*) Matt. xxv. 5.

moſt

moſt intimate friends were ſo very indifferent about his ſufferings, may be eaſily conjectured. Here the following conſiderations offer themſelves.

1. It ought to be eſteemed a ſingular benefit, when God by the viſitations of his grace rouſes a lethargic ſoul from its ſpiritual ſecurity. The diſciples were not over-pleaſed that their Maſter ſhould diſturb them in their comfortable ſleep, for to the weary ſleep is ſweet (*c*), though it was the greateſt kindneſs their Lord could do them. In what a dreadful conſternation would they have been, had a party of armed ſoldiers ſurpriſed them faſt aſleep. We ſhould likewiſe acknowledge it to be a ſign of the tender love of Chriſt for our ſouls, when he does not allow us any liberty to indulge in ſloth; when he ſedulouſly viſits us by the ſecret reproofs of his Spirit; when he diſturbs our ſleeping conſciences, drives away all ſleep from our eyes, and rouſes us up when we are for lying down in a falſe ſecurity. Woe to that man whom the Spirit of the Lord does no longer chaſten; who is loſt in inſenſibility; whoſe heart does not ſmite him, when he commits any thing diſpleaſing to God. This is a melancholy harbinger of approaching obduracy. O bleſſed Jeſus, thou great Shepherd of Iſrael, do thou continually keep a watchful eye on our ſouls!

2. We have in Satan a ſubtile enemy, who knows how to make uſe of all opportunities to gain his point. The diſciples were now tired and diſ-

(*c*) Eccl. v. 12.

pirited, and it was very late at night. How craftily does the tempter make uſe of theſe circumſtances to lay them aſleep? He is an artful enemy, and knows always how to lay in wait to ſurprize us. If he obſerves the mind to be overcaſt with the groſs vapours of drunkenneſs and gluttony, he watches the unguarded moment, and points out to it an opportunity of proceeding further in the luſts of the fleſh. Does he ſee a man inflamed with anger and paſſion? to ſuch a one he ſuggeſts an opportunity of cooling his hot and raging blood, and ſatisfying his revenge by the perpetration of murder, *&c.* How then does it behove us to be every inſtant on our guard, that we may not fall into his ſnares.

3. Drowſineſs, ſloth, and a cool indifference in religious duties, are commonly forerunners of a great fall. It was ſo here with the unhappy diſciples. This lethargic inſenſibility was ſucceeded by a hideous group of ſins. Peter firſt defends his maſter with a ſword, and then denies him; as for the other diſciples, they all forſook him and fled. Spiritual anguiſh is a dangerous inſinuating poiſon, which may ſo ſtupify the mind as to ſuffer it to go blindfold to deſtruction. When therefore we perceive any ſuch diſpoſition in ourſelves, it ſhould fill us with alarm; and make us fearful leſt we ſhould have already entered on the path that will plunge us into perdition, unleſs we in time draw back from the precipice.

4. God's

4. God's children ſeldom fall into any heinous ſin, without having before experienced ſome ſingular viſitations and awakenings of grace. He that ſtands in grace, and takes heed to his heart, muſt have obſerved, that the tempter never watches the mind more cloſely than after it has experienced ſome particular favour from God, and an uncommon fervency in prayer, or in meditation on the Word. The fall of the diſciples was now drawing very nigh; but it was preceded by repeated viſits from the Lord Jeſus. Before Peter denied his Maſter three times, he had before been viſited, awakened, and warned. Man muſt therefore be convinced that his fall is not to be imputed to God. He previouſly gives ſufficient grace, he uſes proper precautions for preſerving a ſoul. Now, if a fall happens notwithſtanding his care, we ourſelves muſt bear witneſs that he was true, and that it is to ourſelves, and not to Him, that we are to impute our ruin. Happy is he who makes a right uſe of the viſitations of grace, which uſually precede temptations.

II.

As to the ſpeech of our bleſſed Saviour, now viſiting his diſciples, it is addreſſed in the firſt place in particular to Peter, and then to the other diſciples in general.

The particular addreſs to Peter is this: 'Si-'mon! ſleepeſt thou? Peter had, above all the reſt of the diſciples, made a ſhow of great courage and reſolution, and had promiſed that with Chriſt he would go to priſon and to death. The

Lord Jeſus therefore firſt turns to him, and puts him in mind that this lethargic drowſineſs little agreed with his ſanguine promiſe, and that he ſet but a very indifferent example to the reſt of his brethren. As if he had ſaid, "Ah! "wretched Simon, where will this end? If "thou canſt not, for my ſake, break thy natu- "ral reſt a little, how wilt thou lay down thy "life for me? If thou art not faithful in matters "of ſmall conſequence, how wilt thou be faith- "ful in thoſe of greater moment?" But it is remarkable, that Chriſt, in this addreſs, uſes the name Simon inſtead of that of Peter. When, by his glorious confeſſion of Chriſt (*d*), he had ſhewn himſelf as a firm, unſhaken rock, Chriſt had conferred on him the name of Peter or Cephas; whereas now, in this ſpecimen of his ſluggiſhneſs and carnal indolence, he calls him by his own name, Simon, in order to make the reproof the keener. Hence let us learn,

1. That the greater aſſurances and promiſes we have given to Chriſt of our fidelity, the more ſenſible reproaches muſt we expect from him if we do not acquit ourſelves accordingly. The arrows of Chriſt's reproof are chiefly pointed at Peter, who had given him the greateſt aſſu- rances of fidelity. This method our bleſſed Lord conſtantly obſerves in his proceedings with men. Of him who has promiſed much, much will be required; and if it be not performed, the reproaches and clamours of conſcience will be the more importunate. Let us now reflect how

(*d*) In Matt. xvi.

many aſſurances of our obedience we have given to Chriſt in the courſe of our lives, from our baptiſm to this time, in our prayers, in our confeſſions, in our ſickneſſes, *&c.* And how few of thoſe promiſes we have fulfilled? Whither ſhall we fly to ſave ourſelves from ſhame and grief, when our conſcience ſhall ſet our perfidy and baſeneſs before our eyes.

2. Whoever cannot deny himſelf in ſmall matters, will be much leſs able to do it in thoſe of greater conſequence. This our bleſſed Lord here intimates to his drowſy diſciple, by reproaching him with his ſleep. This truth every one may be well aſſured of. For inſtance, he that cannot bear a frown, a hard word, a reproachful name, for the ſake of Chriſt, will hardly ſtand his ground when he is called upon to lay down his life for the ſake of his goſpel. We ſhould therefore ſtrenuouſly enure ourſelves to ſmaller things, that the greater may be the lighter to us.

3. By our indolence and ſloth we may deprive ourſelves of ſeveral advantages in our religious progreſs, which we had before acquired. Simon now, for a time, forfeits, by his ſluggiſh drowſineſs, the glorious ſurname of a rock *. Hence is it ſaid in Scripture, 'Hold that faſt 'which thou haſt, that no man take thy 'crown (*e*).'

As to the ſpeech addreſſed to the diſciples in general then preſent, it contains,

* πετρος, the original word, ſignifies a rock.

(*e*) Rev. iii. 11. xvi. 15.

1. A reproach. 'Could ye then not watch with 'me one hour?' In St. Mark, theſe words are indeed ſpoken to Peter; but this is eaſily reconciled with St. Matthew's account. Undoubtedly his eyes were fixed on Peter; but he ſpeaks to all the other diſciples, and upbraids them with their ſleepineſs, 'had ye then not ſtrength 'enough (as the Greek word ſignifies *) to 'watch with me one hour?' You have arrogated to yourſelves ſufficient ſtrength and reſolution to die with me (*f*); and now ye have ſhewn, that ye have not ſtrength enough to watch with me one hour. Formerly, when employed with your nets, you could paſs whole nights without cloſing your eyes (*g*); but now you are to watch with me, you are overpowered with ſleep. This reproof is ſtill the keener, as if our bleſſed Lord had ſaid, "You have not been able to watch one "ſingle fleeting hour, and that with me, your "Lord and Maſter, whom on account of ſo "many kindneſſes received, and ſuch affecti-"onate love and tenderneſs, you are bound faith-"fully to aſſiſt in this his extreme anguiſh." Should a ſervant lay himſelf down on his pillow, and indulge himſelf in ſleep, when his maſter, by reaſon of ſome difficulties and dangers, was obliged to watch all the night, would not every one cry out ſhame on ſuch a ſluggard?

2. An Admonition, with proper motives.

The admonition is 'watch and pray,' watch with your heart and eyes, pray with your heart

* οὐτως οὐκ ἰσχυσατε. (*f*) Matt. xxvi. 35.
(*g*) Luke v. 5.

and mouth. The one muſt rule and animate the other. By watching, the ſnares of the devil are obſerved and avoided; by praying, we betake ourſelves under the wings of divine Providence. By the former, the danger is diſcovered; by the latter, aſſiſtance is obtained againſt it. Therefore Chriſt recommends both duties to his diſciples who were ſleepy and indolent; as if he had ſaid, What is paſt ſhall be forgiven you; but for the future be more cautious, and amend. To this Admonition are annexed two motives.

The firſt is taken from the greatneſs of the danger, 'that ye enter not into temptation.' A great temptation was now approaching them (*b*); a trial in which they were to give a proof of their fidelity towards their Lord and Maſter, and put in practice that leſſon, which they had hitherto been learning in his ſchool. As this trial now approached nearer and nearer, they were by watching and praying to be on their guard, that they might not be hemmed in by the temptation as in a priſon. For we cannot always obtain by our prayers, that the temptaion ſhall not overtake us (*i*). Were we not aſſaulted by trials, we ſhould be ſtrangers to our ſtrength or weakneſs. But by prayer we obtain, that we may not incur the Divine diſpleaſure, ſo as to be overcome by them *. This Chriſt has taught us in the ſixth

(*b*) Matt. xxvi. 31. (*i*) Jam. i. 2, 3.

* εισερχεσθαι εις πειρασμον *ſignificat ita involvi illecebris aut periculis, ut non extriceris. Plenius Hebraei dicunt*, intrare in manum tentationis, *hoc eſt, in poteſtatem ejus atque dominium, ita ut ab ea ſubjugemur atque abſorbeamur.* HERM. WITSIUS Exercit. in Orat. dominicam pag. 169.

petition

petition of the Lord's Prayer; on which our Saviour throws a light here, as the third petition was before illuſtrated by the great example of the Son of God.

The ſecond motive is taken from their weakneſs and inability. Our bleſſed Lord allows, that in them 'the ſpirit is willing;' he grants that it was their real intention faithfully and courageouſly to ſtand by him. This integrity of their heart he owns to be entirely a work of the Holy Spirit, though, on their ſide, mixed with much allay. But at the ſame time our bleſſed Lord puts them in mind that 'the fleſh is weak.' They had ſtill in them the corrupt nature which loves itſelf, and is frequently for preſerving itſelf in an illicit manner; which lags behind when the ſpirit precedes with willingneſs and vigour, but cannot lead it according to its wiſh. Thus their intention indeed was good; but their own natural ſtrength unable to execute it: They ſtood in need of Divine ſuccour, which they were to obtain by vigilance and prayer. This is briefly the ſenſe of the words; from which we may draw the following inferences.

1. That the heart of man is ſo deeply immerſed in corruption, that it is too much inclined to ſloth and indolence, not only under the enjoyment of God's favour, but alſo under his chaſtiſements. Theſe three diſciples had before fallen aſleep on mount Tabor (*k*), and now alſo in the garden of Gethſemanè. Alas! is it not lamentable that we ſhould be ſo addicted to ſloth and heavineſs,

(*k*) Luke ix. 32.

that neither the exuberant mercy of God, nor our own diſtreſs, can chaſe away the ſleep from our eyes.

2. Even the moſt innocent behaviour may be ſinful at an improper time and place. Who will ſay that ſleep in itſelf is a ſin? The night was appointed for man to reſt. However, as this was not a proper place and time, the diſciples are juſtly reproached for indulging it. Therefore let it not be boldly objected, What harm is there in it? before all the circumſtances are duly weighed. Even prayer itſelf may be a ſin, if performed at a time when an occaſion calls upon us to do ſome work of charity to our neighbour, which is obſtinately omitted for the ſake of prayer, and he is ſuffered to periſh through our neglect.

3. In ſtrong temptations, the ſureſt preſervative is vigilance joined with prayer. Hereby the ſting of the temptation is blunted, and the enemy effectually diſarmed. Hence St. Paul, among other parts of the ſpiritual armour, recommends prayer, 'Praying always with all prayer and ſup-'plication in the ſpirit, and watching thereunto 'with all perſeverance (*l*).' If we were more careful to uſe this heavenly weapon, the enemy would not obtain ſo many victories over us; but we run to and fro, and ſeek foreign aſſiſtance, whilſt theſe domeſtic means, preſcribed by the Supreme Phyſician, are too often deſpiſed and rejected.

4. In our conflicts againſt ſin, it is not a good intention that determines the iſſue; but the real

(*l*) Epheſ. vi. 18.

power

power to reſiſt them muſt be obtained by prayer. Man, elevated with his own abilities, conceits himſelf to be a hero, if he does but form a good reſolution; but when he ſets out relying on his own ſtrength, without an humble acknowledgment of his weakneſs, nor ſeeking to God for aſſiſtance, he is overcome before he is aware. Hence it was with too much reaſon, that Luther ſaid, 'the road to hell is paved with good 'reſolutions.'

5. The weakneſs of fleſh and blood ſhould not induce us to look on Chriſtianity as impracticable, but rather drive us to prayer for obtaining Divine aſſiſtance. Theſe words of Chriſt, 'the ſpirit is willing, but the fleſh is 'weak,' are greatly miſtaken and abuſed. The world make uſe of this ſaying, to excuſe themſelves from watching and praying; whereas it is becauſe the fleſh is weak, that Chriſt exhorts us to watch and pray. Others look on all their premeditated ſins as mere weakneſſes of the fleſh; which, however, they think, may be accompanied by the willingneſs of the Spirit, only becauſe they ſometimes have tranſitory intervals of fervour and devotion; and thus they go on in their fatal ſecurity.

THE PRAYER.

O Faithful Saviour! who, like a watchful ſhepherd, viſiteſt in mercy thy careleſs ſheep, and warneſt them of their approaching danger; may we, when inclined to ſloth, hear thy paſ-

toral care calling out in the ears of every drowſy diſciple, Watch and pray! Grant to every one of us a ſufficient knowledge of his inability and weakneſs, that he may not rely on his good intentions, nor account himſelf ſtronger than he really is, but rather be diligent in prayer for obtaining the friendſhip of a more powerful ally, and by his ſtrength, be conqueror in all things. Amen.

CONSIDERATION VII.

The diſciples viſited a ſecond time after our Saviour's ſecond prayer.

'(*a*) AND he went away again the ſecond 'time, and prayed, and ſpake the 'ſame words: O my Father! if this cup 'may not paſs away from me, except I drink it, 'thy will be done. And he came and found 'them aſleep again; for their eyes were heavy, 'neither wiſt they what to anſwer him.'

Here is deſcribed the continuance of the internal ſufferings of Chriſt, and,

Firſt, The repetition of his prayer;

Secondly, His coming back to his diſciples.

I.

As to the repetition of the prayer by our Saviour in his agonizing conflict, it is both deſcribed, and related.

The deſcription of it is in theſe words, and 'he went away again, and prayed.' This going away refers to what had been ſaid before, 'he

(*a*) Matt. xxvi. 42, 43. Mark xiv. 39, 40. Luke xxii. 42.

'came

'came to his diſciples.' Having awakened them from their ſleep, and exhorted them to watch and pray; he again went ſome paces from them, and a ſecond time ſought a retired, ſolitary ſpot. For what end does he retire? It is to pray. He went away from his diſciples; but he went to his Father *. Again he proſtrates himſelf before the throne of the Supreme Judge, and pours out into his Father's boſom the ſighs of his oppreſſed ſpirit, his throbbing heart. This was done 'again the ſecond time,' as the Greek expreſſes it †. One of the two words had been ſufficient; but St. Matthew deſignedly uſes this ſeeming redundancy of expreſſion, in order to command our attention more carefully to the repetition of the former prayer. As if he had ſaid, "Obſerve, chriſtian reader, and carefully mind, "how often Chriſt prays. It is now the ſecond "time that he ſupplicates for an alleviation of his "agony. Think then how hard his dreadful con-"flict was!" This deſcription offers to us the following truths.

1. Prayer muſt be continued without ceaſing; and notwithſtanding our requeſt be not granted, we are yet to perſevere in it. What our bleſſed Saviour taught, namely, 'that men ſhould al-'ways pray and not faint (*b*),' he has here himſelf confirmed by his illuſtrious example. He had already once prayed, that the duration of his inward ſufferings might be ſhortened; but receiving no anſwer, as if heaven had been ſhut

* Ἀπελθων προσηυξατο. † παλιν εκ δευτερου.
(*b*) Luke xviii. 1.

againſt him; that does not diſcourage him from renewing his addreſſes. And when he obtains no anſwer even the ſecond time, he returns to prayer a third time. By this his frequent repetition, he has acquired for us the privilege of making repeated ſupplications to God for the ſame favour; whereas, without this merit of the Mediator, we could not have preſumed to open our mouth again, after the Supreme Majeſty of heaven had ſhewn no inclination to grant us our prayer. With what reverence does Abraham addreſs the Divine Being, 'Oh let not 'the Lord be angry, and I will ſpeak (*c*)!' but now through Chriſt we may venture on this duty, and boldly approach the throne of Grace. We now have not only obtained through him the privilege of unwearied perſeverance in prayer, but it is likewiſe become our duty; and that not only in prayers which we may offer without reſerve, but likewiſe in ſuch circumſtances when we are not abſolutely to deſire any particular thing, if we are aſſured that they are not contrary to the Divine Will; for of this kind was our Saviour's prayer. Let us then make uſe of this glorious privilege; let us by our importunity, as it were, do a holy violence to heaven; and though our prayers are not immediately heard, let us not be weak in faith; but, like the woman of Canaan, let us cry after the Lord, until he ſhews us a token of his mercy.

2. In every act of prayer, the heart muſt be turned aſide from all the creatures, and directed

(*c*) Gen. xviii. 30, 32.

to

to God alone. This is intimated in the words 'he went away, and prayed.' Where the firſt expreſſion denotes the turning aſide from men; and the ſecond, drawing near to God. If the confidence of the heart be repoſed in the creatures, and comfort and aſſiſtance be expected from them only, to call upon God for help is a mere mockery of the Divine Majeſty. He will have the honour of being our only God and deliverer, and the only object of our confidence. 'Thou ſhalt worſhip the Lord thy God, 'and him only ſhalt thou ſerve.' In every prayer therefore we muſt always have in our mind the firſt Commandment, namely, 'Thou 'ſhalt have no other Gods but me.'

As to the ſubſtance of the ſecond prayer, it occurs,

Firſt, In general; for St. Mark tells us, 'He 'ſpake the ſame words.' Our bleſſed Lord does not go about to make any elegant change in the words; but, by conſtantly retaining the ſame expreſſions, he intended to ſhew his fixed and unchangeable deſire. Thus a Chriſtian, when under ſevere temptations, may be reduced to ſuch a want of words, to expreſs his deſires, as to have nothing remaining but the continual repetition of a feeble, but prevailing ſigh. For when we pray, we muſt not think by the dint of eloquence to perſuade, or impoſe upon an omniſcient God; but humility, and poverty of ſpirit, are the moſt powerful orators for prevailing on God to help us in time of need. What comfort muſt it be to a Chriſtian under temptation, to re-

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flect that even his inarticulate ſighs and inward groanings accepted by his heavenly Father, who perfectly knows his wants.

Secondly, St. Matthew relates the very words of this ſecond prayer; whence we ſee that they are exactly of the ſame import with the firſt, though the prayer does not conſiſt of juſt the ſame number of words. His words are, 'Oh, my Father, If 'this cup may not paſs away from me, except 'I drink it, thy will be done.' That Chriſt by the cup did not mean his whole approaching Paſſion, but only his preſent agony and inward ſenſe of the divine Diſpleaſure; and by the paſſing away of the cup, prayed that his internal agony might be ſhortened and mitigated; has been ſhewn at large in the fourth and fifth Conſiderations. From this circumſtance we may learn the following truths:

1. Though we receive a denial from God; yet are we not to ceaſe from acknowledging him to be our Father. Chriſt had already prayed once in vain; nevertheleſs he renews his prayer with the endearing appellation of Abba, Father. We may learn of our bleſſed Saviour to retain a filial confidence in God, and acknowledge him as our dear Father, though our peeviſh fleſh and blood would perſuade us, that he is changed from a tender Parent to an incenſed Judge.

2. In perſevering in prayer, we are always to ſhew an humble reſignation to the good pleaſure of God. In this ſecond prayer of the Lord Jeſus, there appears ſtill a greater degree of

reſignation and ſacrifice of his own Will to his Father's, than in the firſt. There it is ſaid, 'If 'it be poſſible, remove this cup from me;' but here, 'If this cup may not paſs away from me, 'except I drink it, thy Will be done.' Thus in the continuance of his prayer, his reſignation increaſed; and thus it muſt be with us. When we firſt form a wiſh for a thing, and would requeſt it of God, the mind generally, in the beginning, obſtinately perſiſts in its deſires. But God in his faithfulneſs, and pity to our frailties, does not immediately grant us what we deſire. In the mean time, this vehement deſire cools a little; our will is brought into a better diſpoſition, and ſubmits itſelf to the Divine Will; and when we can ſay, 'Thy Will be done,' then God vouchſafes to hear us.

3. Every new aſſault of a temptation muſt be ſucceeded by a new offering of the will to God; and then victory will crown our endeavours. It was ſo with our bleſſed Saviour here. And now, when the furious ſtorm of the dread of God's Wrath aſſaulted him anew, he again reſigns himſelf to the Divine Will, concluding with 'thy Will be done.' In which words he not only ſubmits to bear what could not be avoided, this being little more than a philoſophical reſignation; but even acquieſces in it with his whole heart. So muſt it be with us Chriſtians. Every conflict muſt be followed with a freſh victory, recovering ourſelves from every combat with greater glory and reſignation. But this could never have taken place, had not Chriſt

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by his victory obtained ſtrength to enable us to do it.

4. When we reſign ourſelves to the Divine Will without any reſerve, we are moſt ſure to be delivered from our trouble. Of this we ſee an inſtance in our bleſſed Saviour; he was taken from priſon and from judgment (*d*). But how does he behave under thoſe afflictive circumſtances? He prays, ſaying, 'Thy will be done.' This was, as it were, the bridge on which he paſſed over the torrent of anguiſh and ſorrow. Thus it fares alſo with his followers. A paſſage will certainly open itſelf, if we from our hearts, in time of diſtreſs, ſay, 'Lord, thy Will be done.' For the Will of God does not intend our deſtruction, but our preſervation. God, who permits us to be tempted, will make a way to eſcape (*e*), and open a pleaſing viſta of hope through the gloomy vale of ſufferings.

II.

After this ſecond offering of his Will to his Father, follows his ſecond coming to his diſciples, in which we are to conſider,

Firſt. This coming: 'He came again.' After providing for his own affairs, which, indeed, were likewiſe the univerſal concern of the whole race of mankind, he returns again to his diſciples. Chriſt is here alſo found in form and faſhion as a man. Perſons under great troubles and afflictions go to and fro; ſet about one thing, and then another; and cannot ſtay long in the ſame place, as we ſee in the inſtance of Jacob when

(*d*) Iſaiah liii. 8. (*e*) 1 Cor. x. 13.

he

he was afraid of falling into his brother Eſaus's hands (*f*). All theſe actions of feeble humanity Chriſt took on himſelf, yet without ſin; and ſanctified them in his own ſacred perſon. However, it was not only on account of his own trouble and anguiſh, but likewiſe from a tender love for his dear diſciples, that he went ſo often to inform himſelf of their condition.

Secondly. The condition of thoſe he went to was again very wretched. He found them again ſleeping. The holy Ghoſt intimates ſomething, as it were, by way of extenuation of their fault, and what may ſerve for an excuſe: 'For their eyes were heavy, or weighed down with ſleep. Sleep and fatigue had ſo overpowered them, that when they were rouſed from their lethargy, they could not rightly recollect themſelves. They had no power to exert their faculties. Sorrow had clouded their minds; the load with which they were oppreſſed ſo tied up their faculties that they could not obey the will. Therefore, as St. Mark adds, 'They wiſt not what to anſwer 'him.' Hence it appears, that our bleſſed Lord this time alſo ſpoke to them, and animated them to prayer and watchfulneſs. But it was with them as with perſons awakened out of a deep ſleep, who generally ſpeak at random. It may eaſily be ſuppoſed, with what pity and compaſſion the bleſſed Jeſus beheld this melancholy ſcene. Therefore we do not read of any harſh reprimands in this place, as their miſery was before his eyes; ſo that in this circumſtance alſo Chriſt

(*f*) Gen. xxxii. 7. 22, 23.

acts

acts up to the prophecy of Iſaiah, 'a bruiſed reed 'ſhall he not break, and the ſmoking flax ſhall 'he not quench (*g*).' Hence we may draw the following concluſions.

1. To indulge one's conveniency and eaſe, at a time when Chriſt is ſuffering and ſtruggling under calamities, in his members, is very unbecoming a Chriſtian How baſe and diſingenuous is it for the diſciples to be aſleep, when their Lord and Maſter is under the moſt painful agonizing trials. Now, indeed, he no longer ſuffers in his own perſon; but in his myſtical body, and in his members, he is often afflicted and diſtreſſed. Theſe ſleepy diſciples repreſent ſuch careleſs perſons, as do not lay to heart the ſufferings of the oppreſſed Church Militant. St. Paul, on the contrary, calls upon us to 'remember 'them that are in bonds, as bound with them,' 'and them who ſuffer adverſity as being our-'ſelves alſo in the body (*h*.)' Doſt thou dwell in a houſe of Cedar? Reflect with David, 'That 'the Ark of the Lord dwelleth within cur-'tains (*i*).' Haſt thou reſt from all thine enemies? Yet in ſpirit go with the remaining hoſt of God into the field. Shew thyſelf a man among thoſe, who muſt be continually aſſaulted, but not overpowered, by the gates of hell. Does the world careſs thee? Think that thy brethren meet with the worſt uſage from that falſe friend. If the daughter of Pharaoh owns thee for her ſon, refuſe that honour, and chooſe rather to bear the reproach of Chriſt, and to ſuffer affliction

(*g*) Iſaiah xlii. 3. (*h*) Heb. xiii. 3. (*i*) 2 Sam. vii. 2.

with

with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleaſures of ſin for a ſeaſon (*k*). In a word, by all means take care, that thou be not of thoſe whom the prophet deſcribes, ſaying, 'They lye upon beds of ivory, — and are not grieved for the 'afflictions of Joſeph (*l*).'

2. The more we give way to ſpiritual ſloth, the greater troubles the ſoul generally involves itſelf in. The diſciples, who had not rouſed themſelves at Chriſt's firſt exhortation, became the more drowſy, and ſunk in a deeper ſleep. It is more neceſſary and incumbent upon us to check ſpiritual ſloth in its beginnings, than any other ſin. Sloth, and a diſinclination to good, inſinuates itſelf like an intoxicating poiſon; which being once taſted, a man finds that he has taken an opiate, which gradually deprives him of all thought and reflection.

3. Under temptations, the effects of trouble, and the workings of natural corruption, are carefully to be diſtinguiſhed. We ſee that the Holy Spirit here deſcribes the melancholy condition of the ſleepy diſciples with great compaſſion. 'Their eyes were heavy;' and they had an oppreſſive load at the heart. The like apology occurs alſo in another place, 'Sorrow hath filled 'your hearts (*m*).' Here Chriſt attributes their ſleepingleſs to ſorrow; and pities his diſciples, for 'he knew their frame (*n*).' He could diſtinguiſh the workings of ſorrow from the workings of ſin and wickedneſs. On the contrary,

(*k*) Heb. xi. 24. (*l*) Amos vi. 4. (*m*) Jo. xvi. 6.
(*n*) Pſ. ciii. 14.

the Accuſer confounds all together, and would ſuggeſt other cauſes to a troubled mind; which faſten the more eaſily on it, when ſinking under trials, and oppreſſed with ſorrow. When it ſees that the men of this world have ſeemingly a happier portion, it is apt to ſay to itſelf, "Have theſe "men a more pure and eaſy conſcience than I.' "Alas! all things 'are not right with me." Theſe are ſevere trials, in which our merciful High Prieſt will interfere for our deliverance. From him alſo a miniſter of the goſpel muſt learn, how to deal with ſuch afflicted ſouls in prudence; not bruiſing them by an unſeaſonable harſhneſs and ſeverity, but raiſing them up by gentle means and a well grounded comfort. However, let us ſeriouſly reflect, that if ſorrow and trouble can ſo hood-wink the mind, what muſt the tyrannizing dominion of ſin do!

THE PRAYER.

O Merciful Jeſus, thou faithful high Prieſt, who treateſt thy feeble patients with ſuch lenity and compaſſion. To thee we lament, that our corrupt nature is ſo inclined and eager to ſin, but ſo ſlow to do good, that we often leave thee praying and ſorrowing, whilſt we in the mean time indulge ourſelves with indolence and ſleep. In thy tender mercy, be thou pleaſed not only to forgive us this neglect, but alſo, by the great fervour thou haſt ſhewn in prayer, to animate our hearts with devotion; by thy perſevering conſtancy, impart to us alſo a continual perſeverance

ſeverance in prayer; and by the often repeated ſacrifice of thy Will, powerfully incline our ſtubborn wills into an entire obedience and ſubmiſſion. Grant this for the ſake of thy ſufferings. Amen.

CONSIDERATION VIII.

Chriſt's agony and conflict.

'(*a*) AND he left them, and went away again, and prayed the third time, ſaying the ſame words: Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me; nevertheleſs, not my Will but thine be done. And there appeared an angel unto him from heaven, ſtrengthening him. And being in an agony, he prayed more earneſtly; and his ſweat was, as it were, great drops of blood falling down to the ground.'

Here is deſcribed the third part of our Saviour's conflict, in which we may obſerve, *firſt*, the repetition of the prayer, with Chriſt's preparation for it, and the contents of it. *Secondly*, His being ſtrengthened by an Angel. *Thirdly*, The increaſe of the agony, and in this a violent conflict; a fervent prayer; and a bloody ſweat.

The circumſtances of this tranſaction are ſo ſingular and intereſting, that they do not occur again in the whole narrative of our Saviour's Paſſion; nor is a ſimilar inſtance to be found in

(*a*) Matt. xxvi. 44. Luke xxii. 42. 43. 44.

the whole Scriptures, or in any prophane hiſtory. Hence it may not be improper to treat of it in a method different from the preceding, to the end that this unparalleled circumſtance may make the deeper impreſſion on the reader's mind. We ſhall therefore go through this ſtupendous occurrence, according to the pious Bernard's direction, in an alternative of Meditation and Prayer *; in order, at the ſame time, to exhibit a pattern, by which a chriſtian may diſcuſs the whole hiſtory of our Saviour's Paſſion, in the moſt edifying and beneficial manner to himſelf. May the Lord grant us the Spirit of Wiſdom and Prayer for this undertaking!

MEDITATION.

AS the bleſſed Jeſus, at his ſecond coming to his diſciples, could not rouſe them from ſleep, it is at laſt ſaid, 'and he left them.' A melancholy circumſtance indeed! It was as if a ſkilful and good phyſician ſhould ſit down by the bed-ſide of a patient, and intreat him for his own ſake to forbear a certain noxious kind of diet or regimen; but at length, finding him deaf to his kind precautions, he is obliged to go away and leave the obſtinate patient to follow his deſtructive appetite. Alas! how deſperate and fatal muſt be the diſeaſe, when this ſupreme Phyſi-

* ORATIO & MEDITATIO conjunctione neceſſariâ ſibi adinvicem copulantur. Et per ORATIONEM illuminatur meditatio, & MEDITATIONE exardeſcit oratio. BERNHARDI opera, tom V. p. 260. n. 2.

cian of ſouls gives over a diſeaſed mind, being unable by any means to prevail on the obſtinate ſinner?

PRAYER.

O Bleſſed Jeſus, preſerve me from ſuch a condition, in which all thy faithful admonitions and warnings are loſt. In thy tender mercy forgive me, who have ſo often, during the courſe of my life, let thee knock at the door of my heart in vain; and either have not admitted thee at all, or by my obſtinacy and perverſeneſs obliged thee to withdraw from me. Henceforth I will pay a greater regard to the awakening viſits of thy Grace, and every time with joy welcome thee, the bleſſed of the Lord.

MEDITATION.

YET at the ſame time how comfortable is it, that though it be ſaid, he left them, he did not, however, caſt them away? He ſtill owns them as his dear diſciples, and does not diſcontinue his ſollicitude and care for them. How faithful, how mild, how loving is the bleſſed Jeſus, to have ſo much patience with ſuch weak, indolent, and wretched offenders!

PRAYER.

THOU mild, immaculate Lamb of God! let me be a witneſs of this thy lenity and patience. If I muſt feel the weakneſs and frailty of the fleſh, and ſink under the burden

which I am to bear; caſt me not away in my weakneſs, but be always preſent with me, and in thy great patience and long-ſuffering, continue thy ſacred influences on my ſoul.

MEDITATION.

'HE went away again.' But to whom did he go? To his dear Father, who at preſent, as it were, hid his face from him; but nevertheleſs was pleaſed with this his Son's humble approach. Perhaps it would not have been ſo with me. Had I prayed once or twice to no purpoſe, I know not whether I ſhould have returned the third time to the throne of Grace: But the Son of God was pleaſed by his humble and frequent returning, to atone for my imperfections in this particular.

PRAYER.

O Bleſſed Lord and Saviour! give me alſo ſuch a holy conſtancy in prayer, that I may humbly knock at the door of Grace time after time, and not ſo haſtily take a denial of my ſuit. Henceforth I will ſay, with Jacob, 'I 'will not leave thee until thou bleſs me.'

MEDITATION.

'HE prayed the third time.' How carefully does the Spirit of God enumerate the precious ſighs of our High Prieſt, which he poured forth in the extreme anguiſh of his ſoul into

into the boſom of his Father. This the Pſalmiſt had predicted of the Meſſiah, when he introduces him ſpeaking in this manner (*b*), 'Put 'my tears into thy bottle; are they not in thy 'book? Alas! my ſighs are far inferior to the ſighs of my Saviour; but as he condeſcends to ſanctify them by his interceſſion, ſo unqueſtionably will my heavenly Father condeſcend to hear them, and note them in his book.

PRAYER.

O Deareſt Saviour! may I ſend up my prayers inceſſantly to thee, ſince I know that they are ſo exactly noted in the book of thy remembrance. Are the hairs of my head counted, and wilt thou not much more take account of thoſe ſighs and tears which are produced by thy Holy Spirit?

MEDITATION.

THE Lord Jeſus prayed thrice, that the cup of his bitter mental ſufferings might ſoon paſs over. Paul likewiſe prayed thrice, that the meſſenger of Satan might depart from him; and at laſt obtained for anſwer, That God's 'Grace 'was ſufficient for him (*c*).'

PRAYER.

O Bleſſed Jeſus! may I perſevere unweariedly in prayer, without abating of my zeal. Grant me therefore fervour and attention in my prayers; and help me to aſk until I receive, to ſeek until I find, to knock until it be opened unto me.

(*b*) Pſ. lvi. 8. (*c*) 2 Cor. xii. 8, 9.

MEDITATION.

'AND he ſpake the ſame words.' O how fixed and determined is the Lord Jeſus in his prayer! The ſource of all true eloquence, who teaches men what they ſhould ſay, who gives ſpeech and wiſdom to his diſciples, continually uſes the ſame form of words to petition his heavenly Father.

PRAYER.

THANKS be to thee, O bleſſed Lord and Saviour, who by thy conſtancy in prayer didſt atone for my inconſtancy. When, oppreſſed with temptations, I ſhall be at ſuch a loſs for words as to have only one faint ſigh remaining; let it be acceptable unto thee, and let thy Spirit plead for me with ſighs unutterable.

MEDITATION.

'AND he ſaid, 'Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me.' Ah, how bitter muſt be the dregs of that cup! ſince our bleſſed Lord prayed three times that it might be removed from him. How dreadful muſt the ſenſe of the Divine Anger be, when ſuch amazing ſtrength could not bear it without ſhuddering!

PRAYER.

O Bleſſed Jeſus, how could I then have borne what thy human Nature could ſcarcely bear! Would not this load have preſſed me down

down to the deepeſt abyſs of Hell, if thou hadſt not in my ſtead taken it on thee, and borne its oppreſſive weight. Eternal thanks be aſcribed to thee for drinking the dregs of the cup of God, that the pure and bright waters of his comfort might be plentifully poured into it for me. Thanks be to thee who didſt ſweeten the cup of my croſs, and from thy ſacred lips didſt cauſe pure mercy abundantly to flow into it. Now will I alſo willingly take the cup of Salvation, and call upon thy holy Name.

MEDITATION.

'NEvertheleſs, not my Will but thine be done.' This is now the third time that I hear the Will of Chriſt, in his ſinleſs human nature, humbly ſubmitting itſelf to the Will of God. How much more ſhould I do ſo, who am infected with original and actual ſin.

PRAYER.

O My Lord and Saviour, thanks and praiſe be to thee, who by the ſubmiſſion of thy Will, haſt acquired for me ſtrength to break my ſtubborn will, and to triumph over the ſinful motions of it. Thanks be to thee, who by thy meritorious victory haſt ſo ordered it, that ſuch evil motions ſhall not be imputed unto me.

MEDITATION.

'AND there appeared unto him an Angel from heaven.' How muſt this Angel be amazed at the low abaſement of his Creator! How muſt it have delighted him to have looked down

on

on the deep humiliation of the Son of God! With what humility muſt he have adored the purity and holineſs of God, in this ſtupendous tranſaction!

PRAYER.

BLESSED Jeſus, as the Angel with admiration delighted to behold thy ſtupendous love to mankind; ſo grant that I may alſo with a holy complacency and deſire, with the deepeſt humility and wonder, look into its amazing depth. May thy bitter Paſſion be the conſtant ſubject of my meditations!

MEDITATION.

O How deeply do I here behold my Saviour abaſed! and the Son of God here becomes leſs than the Angels. The God of Angels is immerſed in ſorrow; and the Angel of God comforts and ſupports him. The beloved Son is beaten; and the Servant binds up his wounds. Amazing and unheard of humiliation!

PRAYER.

O Bleſſed Lord and Saviour! Thou deſcendeſt ſo low in thy humiliation and abaſement, that ſcarcely can my mind follow thee down the abyſs. I ſtand afar off, and wonder at thy ſtupendous love, which has drawn thee into ſuch a depth of miſery. Praiſed be thy name, who waſt pleaſed to deſcend to ſuch a lowly condition, as to ſtand in need of the conſolation of an Angel, that by thy merits I might enjoy the ſervice

vice and protection of thoſe bleſſed Spirits, againſt the wiles and aſſaults of the ſpirit of darkneſs.

MEDITATION.

HOW faithful, how merciful, is God! He proportions his reviving comforts to the degree of our ſufferings. When the Lord Jeſus had in the wilderneſs gone through his conflict with Satan, the Angels came, and miniſtered unto him (*d*). Here, the encounter being ſharper, and the ſtruggle greater, an Angel ſteps in during the conflict to ſtrengthen and ſupport him.

PRAYER.

O My Saviour! Give me always ſuch conſolation and ſtrength in all my conflicts, that I may obtain the victory. When all the ſons of men forſake me, let thy holy Angels ſurround me, and thy bleſſed Spirit aſſure me of thy love.

MEDITATION.

AN Angel ſtrengthens my Saviour, undoubtedly by a conſolatory diſcourſe; and a kind remonſtrance, That it is the Father's Will that he ſhould drink this cup, who would ſoon place the crown of perfection upon his ſufferings, and then he ſhould again return to the boſom of his dear Father; that his ſufferings would be attended with the moſt tranſcendant and ſalutary effects, to the unſpeakable Glory of his Almighty Father, and the eternal ſalvation of an infi-

(*d*) Matt. iv. 11.

nite

nite number of ſouls. God undoubtedly accompanied theſe words of his refulgent meſſenger with ſuch efficacy and power, that the human nature of our bleſſed Lord felt itſelf greatly and wonderfully ſtrengthened by them.

PRAYER.

THUS, O my Saviour, let me never be without ſuch pious ſouls who, under any difficulties into which I may fall, may ſupport me by their conſolatory diſcourſe. Give to the words of thy conſoling meſſengers ſuch force and energy, that I may be ſenſible that thou haſt ſent them to ſtrengthen and ſupport my deſponding courage.

MEDITATION.

THIS comfort adminiſtered to our bleſſed Lord appears to me, as it were, the granting of his prayer, and a gracious recompence of his preceding voluntary ſacrifice of his own to the Will of God; which, like incenſe, had emitted a ſweet ſavour before his heavenly Father.

PRAYER.

MAY I, O bleſſed Jeſus, be convinced by thy illuſtrious example, that it is not in vain to poſſeſs my ſoul in patience; but that a new portion of grace follows on every ſacrifice of the Will. Oh make me therefore more inclined to reſign my Will to thine, that I may

give

give thee opportunity of multiplying thy refreſhments to my ſoul!

MEDITATION.

THE cup, indeed, was not quite removed from the bleſſed Jeſus; for the bittereſt dregs of it are ſtill reſerved for him; nevertheleſs his prayer was not ineffectual. For by the conſolation of an Angel, in the name of his heavenly Father, he received a pledge, that he ſhould not ſink under the oppreſſive weight of his ſufferings.

PRAYER.

MAY I, O my Saviour, be content, when, inſtead of what I ardently prayed for, ſomething more beneficial is granted to me; or when, inſtead of the whole I pray for, I receive only an earneſt of thy favour. Let me always be ſatisfied with the preſent comforts, and patiently wait for farther relief.

MEDITATION.

OUR bleſſed Lord is, indeed, ſtrengthened for the preſent; but it is in order to undergo greater and more afflictive conflicts, that his human nature receives an increaſe of ſtrength.

PRAYER.

THUS, O bleſſed Jeſus, may I never deſire additional ſtrength of thee for any other end, than faithfully to exert it in ſeverer trials; but

but by no means in order to ſhake off the croſs; ſo that thy honour may be promoted by my being ſtrengthened, and that thy name may be more and more glorified by my patience under afflictions.

MEDITATION.

'AND being in an agony.' O what a dreadful ſpectacle offers itſelf here to my eyes! Life ſtruggles with death; and not only with temporal death, that not being yet inflicted; but with eternal death, armed with the wrath of God, the terrors of the Almighty, and accompanied by all the malignant powers of darkneſs. Aſtoniſhing combat! in which the curſe of the law, and Chriſt's innocence; the manifeſtation of the Divine Juſtice incenſed, and the diſplay of the Divine Love ſoftened with pity; the rage of Satan, and the Deity united to the ſoul of Chriſt, are engaged in oppoſition to each other.

PRAYER.

O Lord and Saviour! my hearing and my ſight fail me to recount thy ſufferings. As every ſin deſerves death, and thou hadſt the intolerable weight of thouſands of millions of ſin, the ſins of the whole world, preſſing upon thy ſoul; ſo muſt thou here, before the righteous tribunal of God, have endured many thouſands of millions of deaths. I behold thee, the beloved Son of the heavenly Father, overwhelmed with all the vials of God's wrath; by which thy tender humanity

humanity is thrown into ſuch a violent agony, that it appears to be in the excruciating pangs and extremities of death. Oh what an accurſed evil muſt ſin be, to throw thy ſpotleſs ſoul into ſuch an abyſs of miſery!

MEDITATION.

WHAT dreadful effects has the ſentence of death been frequently known to have upon the heart of an unhappy criminal? How he turns pale, trembles, and is exanimated with fear and diſtraction! How ſuperlatively dreadful then muſt it have been to the guiltleſs ſoul of our Saviour, when all the torture, anguiſh, and pain; all the curſes and agonizing torments, denounced by the law againſt the ſins of the whole world, were inflicted on this ſacred victim.

PRAYER.

ETERNAL praiſe be aſcribed to thee, O deareſt Mediator, for permitting thyſelf to be moſt heavily accuſed by the Law before the juſt tribunal of God, and to be condemned as the vileſt malefactor. When Moſes accuſes my whole life, and in his terrible effulgency denounces condemnation; let this thy atoning conflict preſerve me againſt the curſe of the Law. As thou haſt taken on thee my curſe, ſo let thy bleſſing deſcend on my guilty head.

MEDITATION.

THE awful peals of thunder, and dreadful flaſhes of lightning in the atmoſphere; and the hideous yells and roaring of lions on the earth; are the two terrifying images in Nature, under which the Moſt High has been pleaſed to repreſent his wrath in Holy Writ (*d*). But if all the terrible claps of thunder that ever aſſaulted the ear were to burſt at one horrid exploſion, with combined force; and were all the lions of the foreſt to ſet up a hideous roar, at once, after their prey; it were not to be compared with the dreadful diſplay of that wrath of God, which here overwhelmed the ſoul of Chriſt. The moſt terrifying actions of theſe formidable creatures exhibit but a faint and fleeting ſhadow of the infinite wrath of their omnipotent Creator.

PRAYER.

O Infinite Love! What endleſs thanks do I owe thee for thy ſevere conflict with the wrath of God, that I might not be an everlaſting ſacrifice to that conſuming fire? Ever will I adore and extol thee for this unſpeakable benefit, and continually from thee alone ſeek an exemption from the fierce anger of the Lord.

(*d*) Job xl. 9. Amos i. 2. iii. 8.

MEDI-

MEDITATION.

IN this dreadful encounter, the devil may be ſuppoſed to have exerted his utmoſt efforts againſt the guiltleſs ſoul of our bleſſed Lord; but the Divinity which dwelt in this ſacred Perſon would not ſuffer his human nature, the bride which he had perſonally eſpouſed, to be trodden under foot by the prince of darkneſs. Though Satan diſcharged whole ſhowers of fiery darts againſt his ſoul; yet his Divinity extracted all their poiſon, and rendered their ſtroke ineffectual. At the ſame time, he ſo diſappointed the infernal rage of the powers of darkneſs, that henceforth none of the envenomed darts of hell will be able to deſtroy the invulnerable ſouls of Believers.

PRAYER.

UNfeigned thanks be aſcribed to thee, O moſt Mighty, who, in this encounter, haſt deprived the armed ſtrong man, who had the power of death of his ſtrength, and effectually diſarmed the evil One. Evermore preſerve me, that I may no longer inglorioufly ſerve a tyranizing enemy, over whom thou haſt gained ſo glorious, ſo painful a victory; but may acknowledge thee, my victorious Redeemer, for my only Lord and Maſter.

MEDITATION.

UNdoubtedly this agony of our Lord was increaſed by his tender, his inexpreſſible con-

cern for the loſs of ſo many thouſands of ſouls, who, the Divinity of Chriſt foreſaw, would give themſelves up to the enemy of God and Man, and tread under foot the precious blood by which they were purchaſed and redeemed. Should a good King, in order to free his ſubjects from a miſerable ſlavery, engage in a bloody war, in which he was generouſly to lay down his life; and ſhould yet foreſee that, out of a thouſand groaning in captivity, ſcarce ten would conſent to be freed from chains and wretchedneſs, but would rather chooſe to continue in ſlavery for ever; would not this affect his generous and heroic ſoul more than all the dangers, to which he was going to be expoſed for their ſake?

PRAYER.

O My Saviour, how unmeaſurably great muſt thy love have been? when, though thou didſt foreſee the ingratitude of ſo many ſouls who would voluntarily run into perdition, waſt ſtill reſolved to accompliſh the painful work of our redemption. O preſerve me, that this thine agonizing conflict may not be loſt to my ſoul!

MEDITATION.

'AND he prayed more earneſtly,' or properly, 'more intenſely.' Amazing reſolution! As the agony increaſes, the more humbly I ſee my Saviour approach the ſupreme tribunal of God's juſtice. The former part of

his conflict was ſomething leſs violent; but this was accompanied with an actual overwhelming of all his powers. The deeper his ſoul was to ſink into ſufferings, the more it laboured and exerted itſelf.

PRAYER.

TEACH me, O Lord, to imitate this wiſdom, that under my greateſt ſufferings I may proſtrate myſelf in prayer. Do thou animate my devotion when it begins to cool, and, by the unutterable groanings of thy Spirit, ſupport me; that with the humble aſſault of ſighs and tears I may take heaven, as it were, by violence.

MEDITATION.

'AND his ſweat was as great drops of blood.' What a ſupernatural anguiſh, what agonizing ſorrow, muſt that have been, which cauſed ſuch a ſupernatural ſweat. Though God, in the ordinary courſe of nature, has ſo conſtituted the human frame, that on any great anguiſh of mind, and ſudden alarm of fear, the blood impetuouſly flows to the heart; yet in this inſtance ſuch is the power of the extreme agony under which the ſoul of Chriſt was labouring, that it not only drives the purple ſtream of life from its receptacle, the heart; but, contrary to the courſe of nature, burſts the veins, lacerates the pores, and forces a thick grumous blood to iſſue from every part of the body; which, being imme-

diately congealed by the coldneſs of the night, falls, as it were, in great ſanguine clots to the ground.

PRAYER.

O Bleſſed Jeſus! I here behold in thee wonders beyond my comprehenſion. Far be it from me, to give the reins to my preſumptuous reaſon, that it ſhould commit any offence againſt thoſe dear, thoſe precious drops, and depreciate thy agonizing bloody ſweat. Rather will I abhor the greatneſs of my ſins, which occaſioned thee ſuch an unparalleled anguiſh: I will, with thankfulneſs, admire the ardour of thy redeeming love, which made thy blood ſo ready to be ſhed, that it prevents the ſoldiers ſacrilegious hands, and forces itſelf a way through the veins and pores, before thy wounds were opened to give it vent. Amazing love! Unexampled generoſity!

MEDITATION.

'AND they fell on the ground.' Alas! ſhall ſuch precious drops fall to the ground? O let us ſpread our expanding hearts to receive them, that they may be moiſtened with this ſacred, this heavenly dew! Let us ſprinkle the poſts of our doors with this blood of the Lamb of God, that the deſtroying Angel may paſs over them without hurting or annoying us.

BIBLIOTECA SONLEIANA

PRAYER.

PRAYER.

O My Saviour, in thee I have redemption, and in thy blood the forgiveneſs of ſins. Thou haſt rolled thy garments in blood, that in this free and perrennial fountain opened for ſin and uncleanneſs, my ſins, which are as ſcarlet, may be waſhed white as ſnow. Thanks be to thee for this unſpeakable benefit!

MEDITATION.

THE commiſſion of ſin drew on the firſt Adam this fatal ſentence, 'In the ſweat of 'thy brow thou ſhalt eat bread;' but the expiation of ſin drew on the ſecond Adam ſuch labour and anguiſh, that his whole body was bathed in a ſweat of blood.

PRAYER.

IN this thy bloody ſweat, O bleſſed Jeſus, waſh my ſoul when it is to paſs into the gulf of eternity; when agonizing pangs ſhall ſeize my body, and the cold, faint ſweat of death ſhall iſſue at every pore, then, O thou great Angel of the covenant, which thou haſt ſealed with thy precious blood, come to my aid, and with the ſweat that flowed in ſanguine torrents, ſtrengthen me in my laſt tremendous hour. Amen. Amen.

CONSIDERATION IX.

JESUS *comes the third time to his diſciples.*

'(a) AND when he roſe up from prayer, 'and came to his diſciples the third 'time, he found them ſleeping for ſorrow. 'And he ſaid unto them, Will ye yet ſleep, 'and take your reſt? Why ſleep ye? Behold 'the hour is come; and the ſon of man is be-'trayed into the hands of ſinners. Riſe up, let 'us go! Lo! he that betrayeth me is at hand. 'Pray, that ye enter not into temptation.'

In theſe words is related Chriſt's third viſit to his diſciples; wherein we may obſerve,

Firſt, His coming.

Secondly, The condition in which he found his diſciples.

Thirdly, His diſcourſe to them.

I.

As to his coming it is ſaid,

1. 'He roſe up from prayer.' Here it is preſuppoſed that he offered up his prayer in a proſtrate or kneeling poſture. And indeed in his firſt prayer we are told, that 'He kneeled 'down, and fell with his face on the ground;' ſo that we may reaſonably conclude, that in this laſt and ſoreſt conflict, when he prayed with all his powers on the ſtretch, he would much more throw himſelf into the moſt lowly poſture, and

(a) Matt. xxvi. 45, 46. Mark xiv. 41, 42. Luke xxii. 45, 46.

proſtrate

proſtrate himſelf before his righteous Father. From this humble attitude of body he now riſes, and thus ſuſpends the external prayer; though he ſtill perſeveres in the inward offering up of the heart, which is the life and ſoul of prayer.

2. 'He came to his diſciples.' By the diſciples are here, firſt, to be underſtood the three whom he had admitted to be ſomething nearer his ſacred perſon, as witneſſes of his agonizing conflict; but in this laſt returning to them, as his enemies were now at hand, he undoubtedly went alſo to the other diſciples, and awakened them from their ſleep. O what a true Shepherd is he, who, in the midſt of his bittereſt agonies, retains a tender concern for his poor defenceleſs ſheep. In the preceding Conſiderations, ſeveral truths have been already deduced from theſe words; yet are they very far from being exhauſted. Should they indeed occur much oftener, ſome gleanings of inſtruction would be ſtill remaining. The following doctrines may therefore be further deduced from them.

1. A Chriſtian muſt not give himſelf up to prayer, ſo as to neglect the duties of love to his neighbour. Chriſt, the compleateſt pattern of all virtues, has not only, by the punctual regularity and fervour which he obſerved in prayer, atoned for the wandering and coldneſs of our petitions; but has likewiſe left an example for our right conduct in prayer, and the love of our neighbour. He prayed when it was neceſſary,

and when neceſſity required, he gave over. Thus from his great example we are to learn, how to ſeparate and unite prayer and our avocations.

2. When we have received grace and ſtrength from God in prayer, we ought alſo to make our neighbours partakers of it. Chriſt in his prayer being ſtrengthened by an Angel, is alſo for ſtrengthening and animating his diſciples. The ſtrength which we collect in prayer we are chiefly to make uſe of for our own confirmation, and to prepare for a freſh conflict, as the Lord Jeſus had done before; but ſome of it we muſt alſo communicate to our weak brethren; for by ſuch a faithful uſe of our ſpiritual ſtrength, it will receive an abundant increaſe.

3. Inward trials and temptations ought not to render us ſelf-conceited, moroſe, and careleſs of our neighbour's welfare. The bleſſed Jeſus had, in his inward ſufferings, enough to ſtruggle with himſelf, as the prodigious load of the ſins of the whole world, and of the wrath of God, was laid on his ſacred ſhoulders; yet we ſee that he does not lay aſide all care and ſollicitude for his diſciples, but 'having loved his 'own, he loveth them unto the end.'

4. After exerting our faith in prayer, there can be no better employment than that in which love is exerciſed. This we obſerve practiſed by our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, not only in this inſtance, but on other occaſions; as after praying, he delivers Peter and the other diſciples from their

fear

fear and danger in the ſtorm (*b*). After praying (*c*) he heals the lunatic (*d*). Here Chriſt is to be conſidered both as our reconciler, expiating our diſſipation after prayer, and as the great exemplar whom we are to imitate.

II.

As to the condition of his diſciples, 'he 'found them ſleeping for ſorrow.' This ſleep, conſidered merely as taking their reſt, was more unbecoming than the former; as during this laſt ſleep, happened our bleſſed Lord's ſevereſt agony, in which he had prayed ſo intenſely, and ſweated great drops of blood, whilſt they were buried in ſleep and indolence. This ſleep therefore, upon this ſuppoſition, well deſerved a ſharp reproof. But it is again ſaid by the Holy Spirit, as it were, by way of excuſe, 'he found them 'ſleeping for ſorrow.' Though ſorrow uſually drives away ſleep, (as Chriſt by his extreme ſorrow and anguiſh had no inclination to cloſe his eyes) yet men may be ſo overpowered by grief as to doze into ſlumbers. Let this circumſtance teach us the following particulars.

1. Chriſt in his ſevereſt ſufferings, his bittereſt anguiſh, was left without help or comfort by his beſt friends, in order to expiate the exceſſive confidence, which we in our diſtreſs place in men, and eſpecially our friends and relations. This was indeed no ſmall aggravation of the ſufferings of Chriſt, that in his great agony he had not only no converſation with, and comfort from his diſciples, but likewiſe found, that

(*b*) Matt. xiv. 23, &c. (*c*) Luke ix. 29. (*d*) verſe 37.

all

all admonitions to rouſe and awake them were to no purpoſe. By this he intended to expiate the exceſſive and idolatrous confidence which we, in our troubles, are apt to place in the creatures, as friends, patrons, *&c.* and to adminiſter comfort to thoſe, who in their ſtreights find themſelves without any human ſuccour, or the compaſſion of others.

2. Our merciful High Prieſt patiently bears with our weakneſs, when we are overpowered with ſome violent affliction; but this indulgence we are not to abuſe, nor obſtinately indulge melancholy and dejection.

The diſciples, indeed, are compaſſionately excuſed, becauſe they ſlept for ſorrow; yet did they not go without a reproof, 'Why ſleep 'ye?' For they did not ſtrive againſt the ſorrow with which they were ſurrounded; but, as it were, gave themſelves up without reſiſtance, and ſuffered their faculties to be bound up by it. On the contrary, the more violent the onſets of ſorrow were on the ſoul of our bleſſed Lord, the more earneſtly he prays, and the greater his ſtruggles.

III.

Our bleſſed Saviour's words, at his coming the third time to his diſciples, contain,

1. A reproof: 'Will ye ſtill ſleep and take 'your reſt? *&c.*' As if he had ſaid, Will you ſleep away the ſmall remainder of time left you for ſecuring your ſouls? At another time I willingly left you to your ſleep, and to take your natural reſt; but now the time is too precious for indulgence

dulgence in ſleep. Now, as you ſee me ſtruggling and bleeding with agony, it becomes you to drive away ſleep from your eyes, and be vigilant. Therefore ariſe, why ſleep ye?

2. He gives a proper notice of the approaching danger; which at firſt was intimated in general, 'The hour is come,' namely, that hour which the heavenly Father has appointed for my ſufferings; the hour, which I told you of before, is now come. What then is to happen in this hour? 'Behold! the Son of man is betrayed in-'to the hands of ſinners.' By the word Behold, our bleſſed Saviour intends to open their eyes, that were heavy with ſleep, and to rouſe their attention to the danger which was before them. But what were they to ſee? The Son of Man was to be delivered up. In the preſent low ſtate of his humiliation, the bleſſed Jeſus terms himſelf the Son of Man, as he had ſeveral times before. The Son of Man (ſays he) will be actually delivered into the hands of ſinners. By ſinners we are to underſtand, not only the Roman and Pagan ſoldiers, but likewiſe all thoſe into whoſe hands Chriſt was to be given up. For he was firſt delivered up to the Jewiſh prieſts, who, having pronounced the ſentence of Death on him, delivered him up to Pilate, in order to be crucified by wicked hands. Hitherto Chriſt had ſtood as a miſerable ſinner before the ſupreme tribunal of God's juſtice; now was he alſo to be delivered into the hands of Men.

But our bleſſed Lord particularly adds, 'Lo! 'he that betrayeth me is at hand.' By this betrayer

trayer he means the perfidious Judas, but without mentioning his name. Our Saviour is by his heavenly Father given up to this traitor, who afterwards delivered him up into the hands of ſinners. He was now at hand, on the way; coming on at the head of the officers of juſtice, and the ſoldiers, in ſearch of Jeſus, in order to deliver him into their hands, in return for the thirty pieces of ſilver which he had received as the reward of his perfidy. After this follows,

3. A twofold exhortation.

The firſt is, 'Riſe up, let us go!' By theſe words, the Lord Jeſus ſhews his willingneſs to preſent himſelf to his enemies, according to the known decree of his Father's ſacred Will. Here is diſplayed the ſtrength which he had derived from prayer, in willingly ſubmitting to the ſevere ſufferings, which now preſented themſelves to his view. As our bleſſed Saviour was going to the Mount of Olives, he ſays, 'Ariſe, let us go 'hence (*e*).' And now, when he is going out of the garden to undergo his external ſufferings, he uſes a ſimilar expreſſion, 'Ariſe, let us be going.'

The ſecond exhortation is, 'Pray, that ye 'enter not into temptation.' This warning, which Chriſt had before repeated, and which has been alſo illuſtrated, he again, for the laſt time, proclaims in their ears. As the temptation had now opened its tremendous jaws to devour them, he would have them arm themſelves with prayer, and by this means ſecure

(*e*) John xiv. 31.

them-

themſelves againſt a ſurpriſe. Hence we may learn the following truths.

1. The neglect of a duty, or the commiſſion of a ſin, is the greater and more culpable, at a time when it is moſt incumbent on us to exert ourſelves. The diſciples ſleep, during Chriſt's former conflicts, was not without ſin; but to ſleep when he was in his agonizing bloody ſweat, and when the danger was juſt at hand, was much more criminal. Hence the bleſſed Jeſus ſays, 'Will ye ſtill ſleep?' Rioting, gluttony and drunkenneſs, are at all times very heinous ſins, which exclude men from the kingdom of God (*f*); but the guilt of them is aggravated when committed by one, whom his character and office obliges to be careful, to be ſober, and to walk unblameably. They are ſtill more criminal, if indulged at a time when the troubled ſtate of the church of God denotes, that the black clouds of Divine judgments are gathering over our heads, and when we ſhould repent in duſt and aſhes. The neglect of prayer and meditation on the word of God is in itſelf ſinful; but to omit them at a time, when the outrageous youthful paſſions are revelling in our breaſts; to throw away theſe defenſive arms, and inglorioufly yield ourſelves captives to the devil, is much more dangerous. It is juſt ſo in all other ſinful indulgences.

2. When we have unhappily waſted much time, the reſt of our precious moments ought to be carefully redeemed, and uſefully employed.

(*f*) Gal. v. 21.

This

This our bleſſed Lord intimates to us in the queſtion, 'Will ye yet ſleep, and waſte the remaining moments? When a perſon has but a ſhort time for the diſpatch of a weighty and important affair, a prudent man makes the moſt of every moment, and is as ſaving of time as of the gold of Ophir. We have the moſt momentous buſineſs now before us, namely, to prepare for eternity. How much time have we already loſt? Oh, let us well improve the remaining minutes; and as Peter, after he had recovered himſelf from a ſhameful lapſe, exhorts, Let us 'no longer 'live the reſt of our time in the fleſh, to the 'luſts of men, but to the Will of God (*g*).'

3. When one hour of ſuffering is paſt, we muſt hold ourſelves in readineſs for another conflict. The hour whch had been appointed for the inward agony of Chriſt, was already paſt; now he ſpeaks of another hour that was coming on, of which he afterwards ſays, 'This is your hour, 'and the power of darkneſs.' Our bleſſed Saviour has his eye on that hour, and gives us a noble pattern, to teach us that we ſhould never be too ſecure, though we have got the better of a temptation. All the towering ſteep hills of trials are not yet aſcended, and when we think we have gained the ſummit, another hill may preſent itſelf unexpectedly to our view. Skilful mariners, after weathering out a ſtorm, immediately repair the ſhip and tackling, that they may be able to ride out another ſtorm. Thus

(*g*) 1 Pet. iv. 2.

ſhould

ſhould we prepare ourſelves for the ſtorms of trials and temptations.

4. The hour of trial appointed us by God is no more to be changed by our not thinking of it, than the hour of death, or the day of judgment. It is a wretched remedy for a man to think, that he will baniſh the thoughts of all ſuch ſerious things out of his mind, that he may not be moleſted by them; for ſuch a vain attempt does not in the leaſt keep them farther from him. The diſciples did not think on the hour of ſuffering; however, it came though unexpected. He is far more prudent, who does not put off the preparation of his mind for trials, until the laſt minute.

5. To imagine that temptations, and the judgments of God, are yet at a great diſtance, generally renders a man careleſs and remiſs. The wicked man is thus deſcribed by the Pſalmiſt, 'Thy judgments are far above out of his 'ſight (*b*). And whilſt men harbour ſuch vain deluſive thoughts, they ſlumber and ſleep, like the fooliſh virgins in the parable. Chriſt, on the contrary, earneſtly calls upon us, and tells us, that 'the hour is at hand.' The apoſtle Peter ſays, that 'the end of all things is approach-'ing. St. Paul affirms, that 'the day of the Lord 'is nigh,' and St. John forewarns us, ſaying, 'Little children, it is the laſt time.' Happy is he, who by ſo many concurrent voices, and awakening calls, is rouſed to a real vigilance, and active virtue.

(*b*) Pſ. x. 5.

THE PRAYER.

TO thee, O deareſt Lord and Saviour, be aſcribed endleſs praiſe and unſpeakable thanks for thine internal ſufferings, and for all thy care and faithfulneſs, which, amidſt the ſorrows that ſurrounded thee, was manifeſted for thy diſciples, and likewiſe for all thoſe who through their word ſhould believe in thy name. O Bleſſed Jeſus! may the remembrance of thy bitter agony never ſlip out of our minds; never may thy tranſcendant love, which was exemplified by ſufferings, depart from our thoughts. Make us, we beſeech thee, willing chearfully to undergo any ſufferings for thy ſake; and may we never account our lives dear, if we can but finiſh our courſe with joy. Grant this, O Lord, for the ſake of thine unſpeakable ſufferings. Amen.

CON-

CONSIDERATIONS

ON THE

EXTERNAL SUFFERINGS

OF

CHRIST

In the Garden of Gethſemanè.

The accounts given by the four Evangeliſts (*a*), connected and harmoniſed.

'AND while he yet ſpake, behold, he 'that was called Judas, one of the 'Twelve, having received a band of men and 'officers from the chief Prieſts and Phariſees, 'came, and with him a great multitude with 'ſwords and ſtaves, lanterns and torches, 'from the chief Prieſts, the Scribes, and 'the Elders of the people; and he went

(*a*) Matt. xxvi. 47, 56. Mark xiv. 43, 52. Luke xxii. 47--53. John xviii. 3---12.

'before them. Now he that betrayed him 'had given them a ſign, ſaying, Whomſo-'ever I ſhall kiſs, the ſame is he, take him, 'and lead him away ſafely.

'As ſoon as Judas was come, he goeth forth-'with to Jeſus, and ſaid, Hail Maſter, Maſter! 'and kiſſed him. And Jeſus ſaid unto him, 'Friend, wherefore art thou come? Betrayeſt 'thou the ſon of man with a kiſs?

'Jeſus therefore, knowing all things that 'ſhould come upon him, went forth, and ſaid 'unto them, Whom ſeek ye? They anſwered 'him, Jeſus of Nazareth. Jeſus ſaith unto 'them, I am he. And Judas alſo, who betrayed 'him, ſtood with them. As ſoon as Jeſus had 'ſaid unto them, I am he, they went backward 'and fell to the ground.

'Then aſked he them again, Whom ſeek 'ye? And they ſaid, Jeſus of Nazareth. Jeſus 'anſwered, I have told you, that I am he: 'If therefore ye ſeek me, let theſe go their way; 'that the ſaying might be fulfilled, which he 'ſpake, Of thoſe whom thou haſt given me, 'have I loſt none.

'Then came they and laid hands on Jeſus, 'and took him. When they, who were with 'him, ſaw what would follow, they ſaid unto 'him, Lord, ſhall we ſmite with the ſword? 'And behold, one of them who were with 'Jeſus, namely, Simon Peter, having a ſword, 'ſtretched out his hand, and drew it, and ſmote 'a ſervant of the High Prieſt, and cut off his 'right ear: the ſervant's name was Malchus.

'But

'But Jeſus anſwered, and ſaid, Suffer ye thus
'far. And he touched his ear, and healed
'him. Then ſaid Jeſus unto Peter, Put up
'thy ſword into the ſheath; for all they that
'take the ſword ſhall periſh with the ſword.
'The cup which my Father hath given me
'ſhall not I drink it? Thinkeſt thou that I can-
'not now pray to my Father, and he ſhall pre-
'ſently give me more than twelve legions of
'Angels? but how then ſhall the Scriptures be
'fulfilled, that ſayeth thus it muſt be.

'Then the band, and the captain, and the
'officers of the Jews took Jeſus, and bound
'him. And Jeſus ſaid unto the chief Prieſts
'and Captains of the temple, and the Elders
'who were come to him, Are ye come out,
'as againſt a thief, with ſwords and ſtaves to
'take me? I was daily with you teaching in
'the temple, and ye took me not: But this is
'your hour, and the power of darkneſs; and all
'this was done, that the Scriptures of the Pro-
'phets might be fulfilled.

'Then all the diſciples forſook him and fled.
'And there followed him a certain young man,
'having a linen cloth caſt about his naked bo-
'dy, and the young men laid hold on him;
'and he left the linen cloth, and fled from
'them naked.

The PREPARATORY PRAYER.

O Saviour and Redeemer of mankind, thou who not only doſt plead our cauſe before the throne of Divine Juſtice, and for our ſins, wert by thy Father afflicted, chaſtiſed, and tormented; but alſo didſt ſuffer thyſelf to be delivered into the mercileſs hands of cruel men, to be dragged and bound like a felon, to be buffeted, mocked, and ſpurned. Enlighten our eyes, that in thy external ſufferings alſo we may ſo contemplate the wonders of thy love, thy patience and tenderneſs, that we may acknowledge thee the immaculate Lamb of God, that beareſt our iniquities, lay hold of thy merit by faith, and be diſpoſed chearfully to tread in thy bleſſed ſteps in all outward ſufferings. Amen.

CONSIDERATION I.

The coming of the enemies of CHRIST *to apprehend him.*

'(a) AND while he yet ſpake, behold he 'that was called Judas, one of the 'Twelve, having received a band of men and 'officers from the chief Prieſts and Phariſees, 'came, and with him a great multitude with 'ſwords and ſtaves, lanterns and torches, from 'the chief Prieſts, and the Scribes, and the

(a) Matth. xxvi. 47, 48. Mark xiv. 43, 44. Luke xxii. 47. John xviii. 3.

'Elders

'Elders of the people; and he went before 'them. Now he that betrayed him had given 'them a ſign, ſaying, Whomſoever I ſhall kiſs, 'the ſame is he, take him, and lead him away 'ſafely.'

Theſe words deſcribe the coming of Chriſt's enemies to apprehend him; in which we have an account given,

Firſt, Of their leader, or guide.

Secondly, Of the leader's attendants.

Thirdly, The equipage and inſtruments the multitude made uſe of for executing their purpoſe.

I.

As to the leader of Chriſt's enemies it is ſaid, 'While he yet ſpake, behold, he that was called 'Judas, one of the Twelve, came.' The coming of the traitor is thus connected with the preceding words, in which Chriſt had warned his diſciples againſt ſleep, and, among other motives to vigilance, had made uſe of this, 'Lo! he 'who betrayeth me is at hand (*b*).' As our bleſſed Lord had foretold, ſo it fell out. No ſooner were the words come from the ſacred lips of this great Prophet, than the enemies came on at a diſtance. How muſt the drowſy diſciples have ſtarted out of their ſleep, when after ſo many kind warnings, they were ſo ſuddenly ſurpriſed. But the ring-leader of them is ſomething more particularly deſcribed, and

1. By the high-office, which he then bore: He was 'one of the Twelve;' and conſequently

(*b*) Matt. xxvi. 45, 46.

no common diſciple, but an Apoſtle of Jeſus Chriſt; who had converſed with this his innocent Lord and Maſter above three years; had heard his gracious ſalutary words; had ſeen his ſurpriſing miracles; and had even preached the goſpel to others. This man had gradually ſuffered ſelfiſhneſs and avarice to take ſuch an entire poſſeſſion of him, that he went over to our bleſſed Lord's enemies, and of an Apoſtle became a baſe perfidious betrayer of the Son of Man. To denote this dreadful fall St. Matthew and St. Luke introduce the narrative of this circumſtance with a Note of admiration, frequently uſed by the holy Penmen, Lo! Behold! Thus was fulfilled the prophecy in the Pſalms, 'Mine 'own familiar friend in whom I truſted, who 'did eat of my bread, hath lift up his heel 'againſt me (*c*).'

2. By his name, Judas; or as St. Luke expreſſes it, 'he that was called Judas. But nothing could be more oppoſite to the ſignification of his name than his black perfidy; for he was not a confeſſor *, but a denier and betrayer of Jeſus Chriſt. Thus the idols are termed Gods (*d*), who in reality are no Gods.

3. By the place which he aſſumed among the band of our Saviour's enemies. 'He went before 'them;' and conſequently had placed himſelf at the head of the armed multitude: But we may reaſonably ſuppoſe that he was ſome paces before the reſt, that it might not look as if he came thither in concert with the enemy. Hence

(*c*) Pſ. xli. 9. * יהודה *à verbo* הודה *confeſſus eſt. W.*
(*d*) 1 Cor. viii. 5.

he

he is called ‘ the guide (*e*) to them that took ‘ Jeſus.

4. By the ſign he makes uſe of. * He that betrayed him [the betrayer *] had given them a ſign. Here the right appellation is given him; for he was no confeſſor of Chriſt, as his name Judas imports, but a traitor, who, in conſideration of the pieces of ſilver he had received of the chief Prieſts, had engaged to deliver into their hands the perſon of Jeſus of Nazareth. Now as the Roman ſoldiers, who were to ſeize the bleſſed Jeſus, did not know him perſonally, proper care was to be taken that they ſhould not miſtake the perſon they were to apprehend, and inſtead of the Maſter lay hold of one of the diſciples: The traitor had therefore concerted with them, that he would point out the perſon of Chriſt by a certain ſign †; and for this treacherous ſign he made choice of a kiſs, which is a ſign or ſymbol of love and friendſhip, and was uſed among the Orientals as a form of ſalutation between friends when they met. But beſides the ſign itſelf, he had alſo given them the key of it, and told them ‘ whomſoever I ‘ ſhall kiſs is he' whom you ſeek. Laſtly, he had given them proper advice, ‘ Take him and ‘ lead him away ſafely.' As if he had ſaid, “ All my buſineſs is to deliver him up to you;

(*e*) Acts i. 16. * ὁ παραδιδους.

† Marc. xiv. 44. συσσημον *dicitur, h. e.* ſignum commune, *ex compoſito datum, qualia ſolent eſſe, quæ à militibus vocantur ſymbola, quorum alia ſunt vocalia, alia muta.* LXX. *adhibent pro* נס, *vexillum*, Iſai. v. 26. xlix. 22.

" if you ſuffer him to eſcape, the blame muſt " lie at your door: I have done my part, and " will not return any of the money, which I " have ſo well deſerved." Thus he thought he had managed matters with great cunning and ſagacity. No one knew that he kiſſed Jeſus with intent that they ſhould lay hold of him; and as to his maſter, he thought he would not be at a loſs to make his eſcape and to paſs through the midſt of his enemies, as he had done more than once before (*f*); and in the mean time, he might ſafely appropriate to his own uſe the thirty pieces of ſilver. Hence we may learn the following truths.

1. It is a ſign of our deep corruption, that we are more apt to be moved by the apprehenſion of outward dangers, than by the kind admonitions of God and his Holy Spirit. How often had our bleſſed Saviour warned his diſciples to watch; but they were deaf to his awakening calls, and from time to time, indulged themſelves with ſleep. But now, the enemy being in ſight, they were rouſed, and became thoroughly awake. It is frequently ſo in our times. God is for bringing many ſinners from the wickedneſs of their ways, and gives them warning upon warning, ſometimes in their conſciences, and ſometimes by their miniſters, friends, *&c.* Yet they make light of all theſe. But when God ſends ſome calamity or misfortune upon them, or viſits them with a dangerous ſickneſs, or a mortal diſeaſe, it is then they firſt come to themſelves; then they

(*f*) John viii. 58. Luke iv. 30.

firſt

firſt open their ſlumbering eyes, bewail their miſpent life, and promiſe amendment for the future. This depravity of our heart had likewiſe its influence on the ſufferings of Chriſt, and our faithful High Prieſt has expiated it as well as our other frailties.

2. God does not uſually ſurprize any man at once with his ſore judgments; but when all his friendly admonitions are diſregarded, and all the reſpites of his indulgent grace neglected; then his ſevere threatenings are ſuddenly diſcharged on the ſinner's guilty head. The diſciples had time enough before to rouſe themſelves out of their lethargy; but as they did not make uſe of that opportunity, they were ſuddenly ſurprized by the enemy, and they had ſcarce time to recollect themſelves. Hardly had our bleſſed Saviour given them his laſt exhortation, when, behold, the multitude of the enemies were coming in full march upon them. Thus it was with the human race before the deluge. They had firſt a reſpite of a hundred and twenty years; to this was added the time while Noah was building and preparing the Ark; and laſtly, ſeven days more while he was ſtoring it with neceſſaries. But no amendment or reformation enſuing, after the expiration of theſe three terms; we are informed 'that all the fountains of the 'great Deep were broken up (*g*).' Such is the caſe alſo in our days. It has been proclaimed that the great judgments of God are at hand; we have alſo with aſtoniſhment obſerved them

(*g*) Gen. vii. 11.

executed

executed on particular perſons; yet no one lays them to heart. Voluptuouſneſs, ſenſuality, and wickedneſs of every kind increaſe and abound, and the kind warnings and awakening calls of God are entirely diſregarded. Now we may ourſelves, without difficulty, calculate what will be the iſſue at laſt. The Divine chaſtiſements will pour down like a torrent, driven by the Spirit of the Lord: And it is to be feared, that many ſinners, who now imprudently delay their repentance, will, one time or other, be taken ſo unexpectedly as not to have time to recollect themſelves; for God has already ſhewn his judgment on many corrupt trees, which lye as they fall. O that we may better employ our ſeaſon of grace, and rightly improve the preſent opportunities!

3. There is no office or character ſo ſacred, to which Satan does not find an eaſy acceſs. Even among the Apoſtles, there was a Thief (*h*), a Traitor (*i*), nay, a Devil (*k*). What office can be more ſacred than that of a biſhop or miniſter? hence it is called 'a good work (*l*);' nevertheleſs Antichriſt, the man of ſin, the ſon of perdition, has inſinuated himſelf into the ſacred office, and thus hath 'ſeated himſelf in the Temple of God (*m*).' Therefore, let no one pride himſelf, and be lulled in ſecurity, on account of the ſacredneſs of his office, nor flatter himſelf that the ſeducer of mankind dares not approach him. If he has not ſpared

(*h*) John xii. 6. (*i*) Matt. x. 4. (*k*) John vi. 70.
(*l*) 1 Tim. iii. 1. (*m*) 2 Theſſ. ii. 4.

an

an Apoſtle of Chriſt, it can hardly be ſuppoſed that he will fear to attempt any other Chriſtian.

4. The vices and crimes of men ought not to be imputed to the office they bear, or their ſituation in life. Judas was one of the twelve. Now on ſuch a fall of a perſon, his ſacred character, we may ſuppoſe that the general cry was, "See, what ſort of men theſe Apoſtles of Jeſus "of Nazareth are! Theſe are the fruits of their "pretended ſanctity of life and purity of man-"ners." But who will ſay that in this point they judged righteous judgment? With regard to the vices of perſons in the miniſterial office, two errors may be committed.

Firſt, By excuſing, vindicating, and concealing their faults, though they are notorious to all the world, and requiring that ſuch public crimes ſhould be concealed and overlooked, in order to ſave the credit of the miniſterial office. But how can the credit of the miniſterial office conſiſt in being made a cloke for wickedneſs and vice? Is it not much more to the honour of their ſacred order, that they will not countenance any notorious crimes or ſcandalous members, but openly ſhew their entire diſlike of their wicked ways.

Secondly, We may be guilty of another error, by aggravating the faults, and blackening the chraracters of ſuch perſons; and by that means caſting contempt on the ſacred Office itſelf, when they who are inveſted with it ſhew themſelves unworthy of their holy function. Both theſe extremes are very culpable. However, as the ill-natured world is much more inclined to the lat-

ter, St. Paul's advice is the more carefully to be obſerved: 'Giving no offence in any thing, 'that the miniſtry be not blamed (*n*).

5. Moſt men, amidſt all their ſinful ways, affect an appearance of virtue and religion. Judas had contrived the moſt unjuſtifiable ſchemes; yet is he for varniſhing over his perfidy with a ſhow of love and, friendſhip, and for the ſign of his execrable treachery, kiſſes his Maſter, whom he had betrayed. Few perſons are ſo abandoned, as to throw off the appearance of virtue and piety; moſt men do not care to appear in the eye of the world ſo bad as they actually are, and affect to palliate their vices with ſpecious names. Avarice, for inſtance, is called Frugality; Gluttony, Drunkenneſs, and Wantonneſs, are looked upon as the lawful indulgence of our appetites. Preſumption, bears the title of decent Ambition; Lying goes by the name of an ingenious evaſion; Fornication and Uncleanneſs is the more openly practiſed under the ſoftening appellation of Love and innocent freedoms.

II.

As to the companions and attendants of the guide or leader of Chriſt's enemies, they may be divided into three claſſes.

1. The band or multitude. By theſe are underſtood the Roman ſoldiers that were in garriſon in Antonius's Caſtle, near the Temple; who particularly on the great Feſtivals, when there was a vaſt concourſe of people at Jeruſalem, were to have a watchful eye on the Temple, leſt any inſurrection or tumult ſhould happen in that

(*n*) 2 Cor. vi. 3. quarter.

quarter. Of this Roman garriſon, ſome officers were ſent with a party of ſoldiers for appehending Jeſus (*n*).

2. The officers of the High Prieſt and Phariſees, *i. e.* of the Sanhedrim, which conſiſted of the chief prieſts and Phariſees. Theſe had two claſſes of officers, *viz.* the ordinary officers of juſtice, whoſe buſineſs was to apprehend and bring criminals before them (*o*); and their own domeſtics and attendants. Some of both were preſent, and thus helped to increaſe the number.

3. Some particular perſons deputed by the high Prieſts, Scribes, and Elders of the people; to whom Chriſt particularly addreſſes himſelf in the garden (*p*). Theſe alſo were part of the multitude, not only to give the proceeding a greater authority by their preſence, but alſo to prevent Judas from embezzling the thirty pieces of ſilver, and impoſing on the chief Prieſts and Scribes. Theſe three claſſes altogether conſtituted a great croud, a mixed multitude, conſiſting of young and old, ignorant and learned; headed by Judas, as their guide. Hence we may make the following obſervations.

1. When Chriſt and his intereſt are to be oppoſed, it is aſtoniſhing to ſee how all ſorts of men combine againſt him. There was in this multitude a very odd medley of Jews and Pagans, who were united as one man; for the temple-guard conſiſted of Roman ſoldiers, and was at

(*n*) Luke xxii. 52. (*o*) John vii. 32, 45, 46. Acts v. 21, 22, 26.
(*p*) Luke xxii. 52.

other times obnoxious to the Jews. But here not only the ſervants of the chief Prieſts and Phariſees aſſociate with them; but likewiſe the Phariſees themſelves, thoſe ſanctified zealots, who looked on the Pagans as ſo many dogs bear them company. On theſe occaſions when Chriſt and his intereſt is to be oppoſed, the ſpirit of perſecution declares itſelf indiſcriminately in all ranks and degrees. Then they who, at other times, lived in the moſt bitter enmity, agree in one impious cry. Then Pilate and Herod are made friends.

2. The ſuppreſſion of the remonſtrances of conſcience is generally followed by a profane and ſcandalous behaviour. The high Prieſts and Phariſees had hitherto been reſtrained from apprehending the bleſſed Jeſus by a ſecret fear. They were, on the one hand, convinced of the Divine Power exhibited in his miracles, as Nicodemus, in the name of them all, acknowledges (*q*); and on the other hand, they ſaw the love which the people in general had for our bleſſed Lord, and therefore apprehended that any violence offered to him might be attended with ill conſequences. Even but few hours before, they themſelves in a public aſſembly had determined not to apprehend him on the feaſt (*r*). But a fair opportunity being offered to them by Judas of getting Jeſus into their hands, their former fears no longer ſubſiſted, and the prudent ſuggeſtions of their conſciences were totally ſuppreſſed; and thereupon they be-

(*q*) John iii. 2. (*r*) Matt. xxvi. 4.

came

came ſo hardened, and ſo loſt to all ſenſe of ſhame, that they even degraded themſelves by being preſent in this ſcandalous march. The knowledge of what is right and wrong is, as it were, the check by which God directs mankind. When a man throws off this check, and will no longer liſten to the intimations of his conſcience, he naturally breaks out into a wild and diſorderly courſe of life, and becomes like an untamed horſe which has thrown its rider; impetuouſly tramples over every thing in its way; caſts off all ſenſe of ingenuous ſhame and decency; and the marks of profligacy are to be ſeen in the air of his countenance, his apparel, and his whole deportment. This ought to excite in us an inward abhorrence of ſin; for however baſhful and timerous it may ſhew itſelf in the beginning, when it ſtands, as it were, at the door, and intreats to be admitted; yet when once it has got poſſeſſion of the human heart, nothing is more audacious and tyrannical.

3. It is very common, but, at the ſame time, the higheſt abſurdity, to be influenced to commit ſin from the character and reputation of others. When frail man has any little pretence for lulling aſleep his troubled conſcience, he too eagerly embraces it. The multitude, we may be ſure, concluded, that, as one of his own diſciples and conſtant hearers had a hand in this affair, in all likelihood Jeſus of Nazareth muſt have been a peſtilent fellow. Others ſaid among themſelves "The High Prieſts and Phariſees "are preſent here by their officers, and ſome

"of

" of the Elders in perſon; and theſe are men " of learning and conſcience." On this ſuppoſition the others made no ſcruple to be employed in the ſame execrable ſervice. Theſe prejudices likewiſe muſt have contributed to increaſe our Saviour's ſufferings. But, alas! how frequently does Chriſt ſtill ſuffer in this manner in his members, when great, learned, and noble perſons oppoſe religion, and perſecute God's faithful ſervants? But let them conſider what turn matters will take at the day of judgment. They that have ſinned with the mighty, ſhall be mightily tormented.

III.

The equipage and inſtruments which the multitude made uſe of for executing their purpoſe are of two kinds.

1. Some were for caution, as torches, and lamps or lanterns. The Paſſover of the Jews uſed to fall out at the full moon, ſo that notwithſtanding it was night, it could not be very dark; yet they brought with them torches and lanterns in order to find out our bleſſed Lord, in caſe he had concealed himſelf among the trees and ſhrubs in the garden, or ſtolen away and hid himſelf in the neighbouring rocks. This ſhews their great zeal to apprehend Jeſus at all events; but, like all wicked men, they feared where there was no ground to fear (*s*).

2. They had likewiſe defenſive weapons, as ſwords and ſtaves. The former were, for the moſt part, in the hands of the Roman ſoldiers;

(*s*) Pſalm liii. 5.

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the latter belonged to the officers of the high Prieſts and Phariſees. This ſhews that they were under ſome apprehenſions, that Chriſt and his diſciples would repel force by force; and therefore by theſe offenſive weapons they had put themſelves in ſuch a condition, that if it were neceſſary to come to blows, they might be able to carry off their priſoner by force.

All theſe implements and weapons ſerve only to augment our bleſſed Saviour's ſufferings. By their torches and lanterns, they meant to ſhew themſelves perſons that were not afraid of the light; but, on the contrary, they would repreſent Chriſt as a miſcreant lurking in the dark, and conſequently, that the worſt thing that could befall him would be to come upon him unawares, amidſt the blaze of torches. By their ſwords and ſtaves they intended to denote, that Chriſt and his diſciples were to be looked upon as a company of robbers and murderers, who always ſtand on their defence when the magiſtrates are for bringing them to juſtice. Hence we may learn,

1. That craft and violence are the uſual arms, which Satan and his inſtruments make uſe of againſt Chriſt and his diſciples. Here they were both employed; torches by way of precaution, that Chriſt, as they idly apprehended, might not eſcape their hands, and ſtaves and ſwords for offenſive weapons. Thus Satan ſhews himſelf ſometimes as a ſerpent, and ſometimes as a lion. Happy is he! who is armed againſt him on the right, and on the left, with the whole ar-

mour of God, that he may not be deceived by his craft and ſubtilty, nor terrified by his raging fierceneſs.

2. The men of this world uſually judge of Chriſt and his members according to the diſpoſitions they find in themſelves. As theſe were the children of darkneſs, and accordingly were for executing their black purpoſe under covert of the night, they thought that Chriſt alſo loved darkneſs, and would be ſurpriſed by the glare of their torches; and as they were of ſuch an impetuous temper, that they were ready to draw their ſwords on every occaſion, ſo they likewiſe ſuppoſed that Chriſt would do no leſs. This is the ground of innumerable falſe judgments, which the children of the world paſs on the good and virtuous.

3. Chriſt ſtill in his members ſuffers the reproach of avoiding the light, from thoſe who are themſelves children of the night and of darkneſs. The multitude by their lanterns intimated that Chriſt loved darkneſs; and in this his perſecuted members muſt be made conformable to their ſuffering Head, in being accuſed of ſhunning the light, and carrying on their practices clandeſtinely. On the other hand, the children of this world would fain be thought to have a clear conſcience, and to fear nothing, though they ever walk in darkneſs. Theſe ſuppoſed children of the day, who pretend to ſuch clearneſs of conſcience, will be obliged one day to 'conceal themſelves in the dens and 'caves of the rocks, and to ſay to the moun-

'tains

'tains fall on us, and hide us from the face 'of him that ſitteth on the throne, and from 'the wrath of the Lamb (*t*).

THE PRAYER.

O Faithful Saviour! whatever ſins we have committed in the darkneſs of the night thou haſt alſo expiated in the night; and as we have offended the juſtice of God not only with the powers and faculties of our ſouls, but alſo with the members of our bodies, ſo thou haſt been pleaſed to make ſatisfaction for them, not only by the anguiſh of thy ſpotleſs ſoul, but haſt ſuffered thyſelf to be ill treated in thy ſacred body by the hands of wicked men. To thee, O bleſſed Jeſus, be aſcribed endleſs praiſe and unfeigned thanks. Grant, for the ſake of thy love, that by theſe thy ſufferings, we may attain the eternal ſalvation of our ſouls. Amen.

CONSIDERATION II.

Judas's *treacherous behaviour.*

'(*a*) AS ſoon as Judas was come, he goeth 'forthwith to Jeſus, and ſaid, Hail 'Maſter! and kiſſed him. And Jeſus ſaid unto 'him, Friend, wherefore art thou come? Be-'trayeſt thou the Son of Man with a kiſs?'

Theſe words give an account,

(*t*) Rev. vi. 16. (*a*) Matt. xxvi. 49, 50. Mark xiv. 45. Luke xxii. 47, 48.

Firſt, Of Judas's hypocritical ſalutation and kiſs.

Secondly, Of Chriſt's mild anſwer to the traitor.

I.

In Judas's hypocritical ſalutation, we may obſerve,

1. The betrayer's coming; 'As ſoon as Judas came, he forthwith goeth to Jeſus.

It has been obſerved in the preceding Conſideration, that, in all appearance, Judas went at ſome diſtance before the armed multitude, in order to look about for his Maſter, that he might deliver him up. Accordingly, when he was come to the place where our Saviour was, we are told by St. Mark that 'As ſoon as he was 'come, he goeth ſtraightway to him.' One would be apt to imagine that Judas here acted with an entire freedom, according to the mere impulſe of his own mind; but on comparing the paſſage before us with that in St. John (*b*), 'And after the ſop, Satan entered into him,' we ſhall ſee that under all this appearance of entire liberty, Judas was no longer his own maſter, but had given up his underſtanding, his will, and all his faculties to Satan, who now dragged him about as a wild beaſt caught in his toils.

2. The betrayer's ſpeech. As ſoon as he comes up to the Lord Jeſus, he ſays, 'Hail 'Rabbi!' *Rabbi or Maſter was the uſual title which ſcholars gave to their teachers, and in

(*b*) John xiii. 27. * Ραββι ραββι. Mark xiv. 45.

con-

conformity to the cuſtom of thoſe times, Chriſt accepted of this appellation from his diſciples. Thus Peter ſays, 'Maſter it is good to be 'here (*c*); Maſter the fig-tree is withered (*d*); 'They ſaid, Rabbi, which is to ſay, being in-'terpreted, Maſter (*e*).' The Jewiſh Doctors held this title in high eſteem; and were ſo extremely fond of it, as, ſometimes, even to excommunicate thoſe who refuſed to give it them, which prepoſterous vanity and pride our bleſſed Lord reproaches them with (*f*). But Chriſt himſelf might, with the greateſt juſtice and propriety, allow himſelf to be ſo ſtiled by his diſciples; he being their only Maſter and ſupreme Teacher, of whom Moſes had before propheſied (*g*), 'They ſat down at thy feet; every 'one ſhall receive of thy words (*h*).' But by the repetition of this title, Maſter! Maſter! the hypocritical traitor Judas meant to ſhew the joy and love, with which his heart, as it were, overflowed. He withal accoſts him with the ſalutation, Hail! or joy be to thee. This was an uſual form of ſalutation, and occurs alſo in other places in the Goſpel (*i*). But here this friendly ſalutation was moſt wickedly abuſed; for Judas wiſhes his Maſter joy and happineſs, at a time when his mind was bent on plunging him, by his treachery, into the greateſt miſery, and the moſt deplorable condition. Laſtly here is alſo deſcribed

(*c*) Mark ix. 5. (*d*) xi. 21. (*e*) John i. 38. (*f*) Matt. xxiii. 7. (*g*) Deut. xviii. 15, 18. (*h*) Deut. xxxiii. 3. (*i*) Matt. xxvi. 49. xxviii. 9.

3. The traitor's outward behaviour. 'He 'kiſſed him.' It has already been obſerved, that among the eaſtern people, the kiſs was a ſign or ſymbol of friendſhip. It was indeed more uſual for teachers to kiſs their ſcholars, the kiſs expreſſing their affection to them *; however, the writings of the Jews afford inſtances of ſcholars expreſſing their reverence and eſteem to their teachers, by this form of ſaluting, which accordingly Judas obſerves to his Maſter, under the appearance of a particular love and eſteem. But the Greek word imports that he kiſſed him ſeveral times †, in which ſenſe the word is uſed by St. Luke (*k*), ſpeaking of the woman, who, in the tranſports of her ſincere repentance for her paſt ſins, kiſſed our Saviour's feet. Thus falſhood and deceit, affects in words and geſtures the garb and appearance of friendſhip, probity, and ſtrong affection. Hence we may learn the following truths.

1. There is in ſin a certain force and propenſity to proceed in all wickedneſs, by which a man is carried away, as it were, by a rapid and impetuous ſtream. Judas having admitted treachery and perfidiouſneſs into his heart, it was now to enter on action; and he had no longer any power over himſelf. Satan allowed him no time to recollect himſelf, 'forthwith he came to Jeſus.' He was then like one who, having ſlipped down

* Vid. LIGHTFOOT in Hor. Heb. p. 84. (*k*) Chap. vii. 38.

† *Simplex verùm* φιλειν *ſignificat* amare, *et ad teſtandum amorem* oſculari. Κατα *autem in compoſitione ſæpius auget et intendit ſignificationem, ut denotet* deoſculari, *ſive, ut* TACITUS *ait,* oſculis aliquem fatigare. Sic κλαω frango, καταπλαω in minutas partes confringo.

a ſteep

a ſteep declivity, is unable to ſtop his courſe, but ſlides on to the very bottom of it. So that the beſt advice we can follow, is, to watch the firſt beginnings of ſinful motions, and be cautious that we do not take delight and acquieſce in them; otherwiſe we ſhall not be able to reſiſt them, as too many have experienced to their infinite ſorrow. When a man is prevailed upon to be preſent in bad company, he at the ſame time reſolves to be ſtrictly on his guard, and avoid all intemperance and exceſs: He concludes, there can be no great harm in a little indulgence; but before he is aware, Satan ſnatches the reins out of his hand, and drives him into ſin and infamy.

2. The children of this world often, by their aſſiduity in their purſuits, ſhame the children of God; the latter ſeldom ſhewing ſo much zeal for good, as the former for evil. It muſt certainly make us bluſh, to ſee how readily and undauntedly Judas comes up to the bleſſed Jeſus, to abuſe him with his inſidious ſalutation and kiſs. No one is thus zealous and ardent to run into the open arms of our bleſſed Saviour. He graciouſly invited ſinners, ſaying, 'Come unto 'me all that labour and are heavy laden (*l*)!' but how few came to this good Shepherd on this friendly invitation? How often is he ſtill to repeat the lamentation he made over ungrateful Jeruſalem, 'How often would I have gathered 'you together, and ye would not (*m*)?' Certainly, it muſt reflect great diſgrace on us, that Judas ſhould ſhew more ardour and readineſs to

(*l*) Matt. xi. 28. (*m*) Matt. xxiii. 37.

betray our bleſſed Lord, and deliver him up to his enemies, than we to receive this Divine Gueſt. When he ſays, 'My Son, give 'me thy heart,' how ſlow are we in offering it up to him? how often, and how long, is he obliged to intreat for it?' Therefore, this promptitude of Judas ſhould ſhame us, and excite our minds to an immediate and willing obedience. What can make us pauſe and heſitate? Why do we ſuffer ourſelves to be fettered by the ſpirit of ſluggiſhneſs? Are we afraid of being happy too ſoon? If we ſaw the avenger of blood at our heels, we ſhould not ſtand gazing about, but ſtretch every fibre to reach the city of Refuge, and ſave our ſouls alive.

3. To addreſs Chriſt with Lord, Lord, and yet not do the Will of his heavenly Father (*n*), is a deceit exactly reſembling the perfidy of Judas. He cried, Rabbi! Rabbi! and yet had evil deſigns in his heart againſt his Maſter: Thus thouſands of outward profeſſors ſay, Lord, Lord, yet do not obey his precepts; which, in reality, is mocking Chriſt. None ſhould more carefully guard againſt ſuch hypocriſy, than ſtudents in divinity. For in learning the Will of God from the Holy Scriptures and the ſalutary words of our bleſſed Saviour, they acknowledge Chriſt for their Rabbi, their Lord and Maſter. Now if they, at the ſame time, live according to their depraved luſts and appetites, and as ſlaves of ſin and Satan do, what is this but treading in the footſteps of Judas, who had the title, Rabbi,

(*n*) Matt. vii. 21.

Rabbi,

Rabbi, fluent on his tongue; yet was at the ſame time a treacherous enemy, and the betrayer of Chriſt? All ſuch perfidiouſneſs the Son of God was pleaſed to expiate, and conſequently has obtained the remiſſion of ſuch dreadful ſins, if only repented of and relinquiſhed in time.

4. The falſhood and deceit committed by the firſt Adam at his fall, and daily repeated by his poſterity, the ſecond Adam was moſt painfully to expiate. Theſe falſe compliments and pretended marks of reſpect, paid to Chriſt in the Garden, could not but give him a great deal of pain; his eyes being ſo pure, that they cannot behold iniquity. Now the more ſincere and virtuous a perſon is, the more uneaſineſs does it give him to find others behaving deceitfully; eſpecially thoſe to whom he has ſhewn much tenderneſs, and done many kind offices. Hence we may eaſily conceive, how near ſuch diſſimulation and treachery muſt go to our bleſſed Saviour's heart. But by this perfidious treatment, was he to expiate the deceit and craft practiſed by man in the Garden of Paradiſe, when he broke his allegiance to his indulgent Creator. As we all ſinned in the fall, ſo is the falſity of the human heart in every one of us included in this treacherous kiſs. Chriſt has, therefore by this expiated, on our repentance, all kinds of diſſimulation, hypocriſy, falſe compliments, and empty ceremonies, which are too often practiſed by men, with a deſign of impoſing on God, or their neighbour. Theſe practices,

tices, in the ſight of God, are no inconſiderable ſins; though to circumvent and deceive others, by an outſide ſhow of love and friendſhip, when the heart means quite otherwiſe, is by the world accounted prudence and cunning (*o*). If we find ourſelves infected with this contagion, let us bring our deceitful hearts to our bleſſed Lord, who is true and faithful, and in whoſe mouth was no deceit or guile; and pray to him that he would heal them, and inſpire us with an abhorrence of all kind of treachery, falſhood, and diſſimulation.

5. As Chriſt offered his lips to ſuch a deceitful kiſs, no ſincere Chriſtian ſhould entertain the leaſt apprehenſion, that he will turn away from his addreſſes. We do not here read that the gentle, the mild, the unreſenting Jeſus turned aſide his face when Judas approached to kiſs him; but as he afterwards offered his ſacred back to the ſmiters, and his face to ſhame and ſpitting; ſo here he offers his lips to the falſe kiſs. Has our bleſſed Lord endured ſuch a kiſs, which ſavoured of diſſimulation and the blackeſt perfidy? How ſhall he then repulſe a pious ſoul that would kiſs the Son in faith, and in the ſpirit draw near to thoſe lips, on which grace is abundantly poured (*p*)?

II.

We come next to Chriſt's mild anſwer to the traitor; which contains in it a twofold ſpeech, and two queſtions.

In the twofold ſpeech or addreſs to Judas, he

(*o*) Pſal. lv. 21. (*p*) Pſal. xlv. 3.

firſt calls his betrayer by the endearing title of Friend; a name by which, amongſt the ancients, teachers uſed to addreſs their ſcholars. By this, our bleſſed Saviour gently reminds his betrayer of the former friendſhip and confidence, in which they had reciprocally lived (*q*), and likewiſe of the duty and affection incumbent on him as a true and faithful friend. But immediately after this, he accoſts him by his own proper name, 'Judas!' This was in order to impreſs on his mind the ſignification of that name, according to which he was to own his Maſter, as a Confeſſor*, and not to deny and betray him.

The two queſtions are,

1. 'Wherefore art thou come?' Chriſt by this queſtion reminds Judas of the cauſe of his coming. As if he had ſaid, "You would "not, indeed, have it known, for what end "you are come here; you are for covering your "falſhood with the ſhow of reſpect and friend-"ſhip: But I know your horrid deſign, and the "treachery of your heart is not concealed from "me." Thus our bleſſed Lord, even under this deep abaſement and humiliation, ſhews that he is a Searcher of the thoughts and intentions of the heart.

2. 'Betrayeſt thou the Son of Man with a 'kiſs? Here he gives the action its proper name, and plucks the maſk from the diſſembling traitor's face. "Thou betrayeſt the Son of Man "whom thou thyſelf haſt preached to the "world, of whom thou haſt received ſo many

(*q*) Pſal. xli. 9.

* See note, p. 118.

"favours;

" favours; and, what is ſtill worſe, with a kiſs " the uſual ſign of peace and friendſhip." By this gentle and endearing manner of accoſting him, Chriſt is ſtill for ſoftening the ſtony heart of his betrayer, and filling it with better thoughts: But all was in vain! He was now quite hardened. He had already heard many pathetical diſcourſes from his Maſter, but had paid no manner of regard to them; ſo that Satan now had obtained an abſolute power over his obdurate heart. Hence let us learn,

1. That the affectionate mildneſs and indulgent tenderneſs of the Lord Jeſus towards the greateſt of ſinners, was to atone for the hardneſs of our ſavage hearts. Chriſt ſtill calls him his friend, who acted the part of an enemy towards him. Why does he not ſay, 'Thou hypocrite; thou 'child of the devil, full of all ſubtilty and miſ-'chief!' Why does he not repeat the dreadful cataſtrophè that was to befall him who ſhould betray the Son of Man? Alas! had the beſt and mildeſt among us been in our bleſſed Saviour's place, ſcarcely would he have ſhewn ſuch unparalleled gentleneſs. But let not our eye be evil, becauſe the Lord is ſo good; for we partake of his goodneſs. This is of ſingular advantage to a repenting ſinner, when Satan would inſpire him with the moſt terrifying ideas of Chriſt's juſtice and inflexibility; then may an humble and contrite heart very juſtly make this inference: Did my Saviour talk with ſo much lenity and tenderneſs to a falſe friend? he will by no means ſternly reject me who am not conſcious

ſcious of any perfidiouſneſs? Alas! if the human heart be not moved by this amazing condeſcenſion of Chriſt, it has certainly great cauſe to lament its invincible obduracy. This gentleneſs of our bleſſed Lord ought alſo to amend and ſoften our impetuoſity of temper, and proneneſs to anger, and make us learn to be mild and gentle towards the wicked; and this duty is particularly incumbent on a miniſter of Chriſt (*r*).

2. The gentleneſs of Chriſt in this inſtance, ſhould alſo teach us to obſerve a right method in reproving ſinners. Here likewiſe the Lamb of God atones for our imprudence, in reproving the wickedneſs of others, in extenuating our own faults, and vehemently inveighing againſt thoſe of our neighbour; by which means we often more imbitter the heart of him, whom we ought to have reproved with brotherly love and mildneſs.

THE PRAYER.

O Thou moſt mild and forgiving Jeſus! who didſt ſhew the greateſt love and tenderneſs to thy greateſt enemy; let me alſo when I have offended thee, partake of this thy kindneſs and gentleneſs. Give me grace alſo to love mine enemies, and to bear the greateſt injuries with all patience and gentleneſs, after thy great example. Amen.

(*r*) 2 Tim. ii. 24.

CON-

CONSIDERATION III.

CHRIST'S *firſt diſcourſe with the multitude of his enemies.*

'(a) JESUS therefore, knowing all things that 'ſhould come upon him, went forth, and 'ſaid unto them, Whom ſeek ye? They anſwered 'him, Jeſus of Nazareth. Jeſus ſaith unto them, 'I am he. And Judas alſo, who betrayed him, 'ſtood with them. As ſoon as Jeſus had ſaid 'unto them, I am he, they went backward, and 'fell to the ground.'

Theſe words exhibit to us the firſt diſcourſe of Chriſt with the band of his enemies; and this is related by St. John only, who is particularly attentive to, and points out every ray of Chriſt's Divinity. Here,

Firſt, Are to be obſerved, the perſons who diſcourſed together.

Secondly, The words of their diſcourſe.

Thirdly, The wonderful effect of thoſe words.

I.

They who are diſcourſing together are,

1. On one Side, the Lord Jeſus, who is deſcribed, both according to his Omniſcience, and his readineſs to ſuffer.

Of his Omniſcience, it is ſaid, 'Jeſus know-'ing all things that ſhould come upon him.' Our bleſſed Lord could unqueſtionably ſee the blaze of the torches at a diſtance, and hear the

(a) John xviii. 4, 5, 6.

con-

confuſed noiſe which ſuch a multitude muſt have cauſed in coming along. But had they come in the dark, and with the greateſt ſilence, he would, by the effulgent light of his Omniſcience, have ſeen into their hidden devices. He not only knew, that the enemy was at hand; but likewiſe 'knew all things that ſhould come upon him,' all the inhuman inſults, affronts, the bonds, and ſavage barbarity, which attended this armed multitude.

The readineſs of our bleſſed Lord to ſuffer, is expreſſed in theſe words, 'He went forth,' *i. e.* out of the Garden, that he might not be the cauſe of any detriment to the owner of it; which muſt have been the conſequence of ſuch a multitude forcing their way in, and treading every thing under foot. Accordingly, he goes towards his enemies, indicating that it was not their ſtratagem and malice that brought him to his death, but his own goodneſs and reſignation. By his avoiding it hitherto, his deſign was to teach us, that we are not wilfully to run into danger, and tempt God. But now his hour being come, he by his voluntary preſenting himſelf, teaches us, that under the prevalence of danger, we are to ſubmit our wills to the Will of God.

2. On the other ſide was the multitude of ſoldiers and officers; among whom were likewiſe ſome of the Prieſts, Scribes, and Elders of the people who, under the guidance of the traitor Judas, were come in queſt of him with ſwords, ſtaves, and torches. Theſe are the parties

ties in the converſation. Hence the following obſervations offer themſelves.

1. The Son of God was pleaſed to ſuffer knowingly and voluntarily, in order to atone for our known voluntary ſins. Chriſt knew all that was to befal him, yet he determined to undergo the whole. When men foreſee any misfortune or calamity, they make uſe of ſuch knowledge for avoiding it. But Chriſt makes uſe of his Omniſcience, in order the more readily to meet his ſufferings; being well aſſured, that nothing could befal him, but what was determined in the ſecret counſels of God concerning the Meſſiah. By this willing ſubmiſſion, he was to atone for our preſumptuous fall. Our firſt parents were not ignorant, that in the forbidden tree they ſhould eat death. They had before been told, 'On the day thou eateſt thereof, 'thou ſhalt ſurely die.' Notwithſtanding this, they followed their own imagination, and thus ſinned againſt knowledge. Even now, though we know what will be the conſequence of ſin; though the Scripture clearly and expreſly ſays, 'He that believeth not ſhall be condemned; 'if ye live according to the fleſh, ye ſhall die; 'the works of the fleſh are manifeſt, which are, 'adultery, fornication, hatred, murder, *&c.* 'of which I tell you before, that they who do 'ſuch things ſhall not inherit the kingdom of 'God;' yet we venture on theſe heinous ſins, and look upon all the threatening of the Word of God as mere empty ſounds. To expiate and atone for ſuch our preſumptuous ſins, the Son of God

God was to ſuffer voluntarily; O that this Conſideration may powerfully deter us from all deliberate and voluntary ſins!

2. Chriſt's willingneſs to undergo his ſufferings is to be looked upon as a conſiderable part of his merit. The victims in the ſacrifices of the Old Teſtament were dragged to the Altar with cords; but Chriſt preſented himſelf there voluntarily, and went like a patient lamb to meet thoſe miſcreants who ſought him. This willingneſs to ſurrender himſelf is the more to be admired, as it was accompanied with omniſcience. Many a Chriſtian has willingly gone towards a danger which he did not foreſee, or could not avoid; but poſſibly had he known beforehand, what calamity or torture was waiting for him, it would have put him to a ſtand. But in this appears the infinite ſuperiority of Chriſt: He did not go to his ſufferings, as it were, blindfold, but enlightened by the All-ſeeing eye of Omniſcience itſelf. What a meritorious power lies in this circumſtance, we learn from St. Paul (*b*), where he certifies, that by the willingneſs of Chriſt to accompliſh the good will of God in our redemption, we are reconciled and ſanctified; this being the ſweet-ſmelling ſavour which, in the ſacrifice of Chriſt, was ſo acceptable to his heavenly Father (*c*). By this means he has atoned for all the murmuring and reluctancy, with which our impatient fleſh goes to the ſufferings which God has ap-

(*b*) Heb. x. 9, 10. (*c*) Eph. v. 2.

pointed for us; and at the ſame time, he has given us a ſhining example for our imitation.

3. It is a Chriſtian's duty, wilfully to cauſe no detriment or uneaſineſs to any one. Chriſt immediately went out of the garden, that the owner of it might not ſuſtain any damage: So likewiſe ſhould his followers do. Every one, indeed, ſhould be willing, when it is neceſſary, to ſhare in the ſufferings of their fellow Chriſtians, which St. Paul commends in his Epiſtle to the Hebrews (*d*). But charity requires us to uſe the utmoſt caution againſt unneceſſarily cauſing others to participate in our ſufferings. That heart muſt be a ſtranger to love and charity, which can think that others ought to ſuffer with it, when there is no neceſſity to involve them in the ſame calamity. Peter was reproved by our bleſſed Lord when he ſeemed to envy John, becauſe he apprehended he was not to ſuffer like the reſt of the Apoſtles (*e*). True love, or charity, rejoyces at another's welfare (*f*); and it is no comfort to the good Chriſtian to have many companions in his ſufferings. This love was eminently conſpicuous in the primitive Chriſtians under their perſecutions; inſomuch that the ſevereſt tortures could not work on them to betray their brethren and companions in the faith of Chriſt.

II.

In the words which were ſpoken by both parties in this converſation are to be conſidered,

(*d*) Chap. x. 32, 33. (*e*) John xxi. 21, 22. (*f*) 1 Cor. xiii. 6. συγχαιρει τη αληθεια.

Firſt

Firſt, The queſtion put by our Lord to the multitude, *viz.* 'Whom ſeek ye?' Theſe words indicate Chriſt's uncommon reſolution and intrepidity. This is the more to be wondered at, as Satan had juſt before diſcharged all his fiery darts at our bleſſed Lord; and he had been entirely ſurrounded by fears, terrors, ſorrow, and extreme anguiſh of ſoul. But now this inward agony is ſubſided, his placid countenance ſhews him all ſerenity, fortitude, and reſignation. Accordingly his enemies no ſooner appear than he intrepidly aſks them, 'Whom ſeek ye?' Not that he was ignorant whom they ſought, St. John, but a little before, having obſerved that 'Jeſus knew all that was to come upon 'him;' but that he might have an opportunity of making himſelf known to the multitude. From theſe words it may reaſonably be concluded that not one of the croud knew him, and that they all had been ſtruck with blindneſs at the garden door, as the Sodomites were at Lot's door (*g*), and the Syrians when they came to take Eliſha (*h*). And though they did not want torches and lanterns, they were now feeling their way, and did not know where they were.

Secondly, The enemies anſwer. They anſwered him, 'Jeſus of Nazareth,' namely, it is he whom we ſeek. This name is frequently given to our bleſſed Saviour by way of contempt; as he had been educated by obſcure parents at Nazareth, a mean town in Galilee, and had paſt moſt of his life there. The deſpicable opinion

(*g*) Gen. xix. 11. (*h*) 2 Kings vi. 18.

which the Jews had of this little place appears from the queſtion put by upright Nathanael, 'Can there any good thing come from Na-'zareth (*i*).' Nay, Chriſt himſelf was ſo little reſpected in this place, that he owns that 'A 'prophet is not without honour, but in his own 'country (*k*).' Therefore theſe words, 'Jeſus 'of Nazareth,' which were alſo ſuperſcribed on the Croſs, were undoubtedly ſpoken by way of contempt, and ſhewed the pride and malice of the multitude; as the modern Jews in their writings contemptuouſly ſtile our bleſſed Saviour *The Nazarene*. We come,

Thirdly, To Chriſt's confeſſion, 'I am he.' "I am that Jeſus of Nazareth, whom you ſeek." This is a freſh proof of the willing readineſs with which our bleſſed Saviour went to his ſufferings. For here he makes himſelf known, without any fear of the conſequences; and though his enemies were ſtruck with blindneſs, yet ye chooſes rather to open their eyes, than to take the advantage of their blindneſs to make his eſcape, as Eliſhah did when he was ſurrounded by his enemies in Dodan (*l*).

When the firſt Adam became obnoxious to the Divine Juſtice, he fled, and hid himſelf; and God called 'Adam, where art thou?' But the ſecond Adam, when he was delivered into the hands of his enemy, called out, 'Here 'am I.' Hence we learn the following truths.

(*i*) John i. 46. (*k*) Mark vi. 1, 2, 3, 4. (*l*) 2 Kings vi. 18, 19, 20.

1. Chriſt

1. Chriſt was the principal mark at which all the fiery darts of Satan, and all his infernal engines, were levelled. Theſe men being aſked, 'Whom ſeek ye?' They made no difficulty of anſwering, 'Jeſus of Nazareth.' He is the King on mount Sion, againſt whom the 'Jews 'take counſel, and the Heathen rage (*m*).' He is the mark aimed at in all the perſecutions which the world raiſes againſt goodneſs. For however they may frequently pretend quite different motives, and charge the ſervants of God with all kinds of vices and raiſing tumults; yet theſe are only fig-leaf coverings of their own malice and rancour againſt Chriſt. Would they frankly own who it is that they ſeek in all their crafty and bloody-minded attempts, it would plainly appear that it is Jeſus of Nazareth. Therefore it ſhould be no matter of wonder to us, that when we enliſt under the banner, and among the followers, of Jeſus Chriſt, we become members of a ſect which is every where ſpoken againſt (*n*). While a man conforms to the world, and follows its pomps and vanities, its debaucheries and diſorderly courſes, he will be courted and eſteemed by all who reſemble him in diſſolution of manners: Nay, if he leads a life that is not openly ſcandalous, and obſerves ſome outward decorum, he may avoid the hatred of the reſt of the world. But whenever the refined temper of Chriſt diſplays itſelf in his conduct, he then becomes the mark of obloquy and ill-will. The world can bear with all kinds of

(*m*) Pſalm ii. 1. (*n*) Acts xxviii. 22.

excellencies, except thoſe virtues which bear the diſtinguiſhing marks of the Lord Jeſus.

2. When the ſpirit of murder exerts the hands of the world to perſecute the Saints, the ſpirit of ſlander, calumny, and ridicule, generally actuates their tongues. In the inſtance before us they are both ſeen united together. As the impious hands of Chriſt's enemies were bringing weapons to aſſault, and cords to bind him; ſo their envenomed tongues load him with the contemptuous name of a Nazarene. Satan, indeed, often ſhews himſelf as a lying Spirit, when he can carry his malice no farther, and cannot murder or perſecute; but ſeldom exerts himſelf as a murdering Spirit without ſcattering about lies, calumnies, and all kinds of abuſive language. Thus St. Paul, in the hiſtory of his ſufferings, is called 'a ring-leader 'of the ſect of the Nazarenes (*o*).' Others have been treated no better; for the world is continually branding with new names of contempt thoſe who do not ſide with it, but are actuated with real goodneſs. But who would lay to heart ſuch empty ſounds? What detriment was it to Chriſt in his ſufferings to be called a Nazarene? God, on the contrary, gave him a name, 'to which every knee muſt bow (*p*). This favour of a new name, he has promiſed to all that ſhall overcome (*q*). He that cannot bear an opprobrious name for the ſake of Chriſt, is not worthy of him, but is ſtill a novice in his ſchool.

(*o*) Acts xxiv. 5. (*p*) Phil. ii. 9, 10. (*q*) Rev. ii. 17.

III. The

III.

The Evangeliſt, before he relates the wonderful effects of our bleſſed Lord's words, adds, 'And Judas alſo, who betrayed him, ſtood 'with them.' Probably he was a little confounded, when he ſaw matters were like to take another turn than he had imagined. However, from theſe words one would almoſt conclude, that he had boldly placed himſelf at the head of the multitude, without feeling any remorſe; for though he had been better inſtructed in goodneſs than the reſt, his heart was grown obdurate by long oppoſition to the motions of grace. This is, indeed, a melancholy ſign, and may juſtly impreſs a holy fear on all thoſe who are ſtudents in Theology. One who had been in the ſchool of Chriſt himſelf, and had heard the words of eternal life from his own mouth, yet arrives at ſuch an aſtoniſhing pitch of wickedneſs. He arms his ſhameleſs forehead with unmoved effrontery, whilſt the multitude tremble and fall proſtrate before the majeſty of Chriſt. Thus ſad experience teaches us, that when thoſe who are daily converſant with the Word of God relax in their morals, they become ſuperlatively wicked, and run greater lengths than other ſinners. If they bring ſuch an impious temper with them into the miniſterial office, they prove a moſt pernicious ſet of men, the betrayers of Chriſt's cauſe, the perſecutors of his members, and enemies to all goodneſs. For by neglecting ſo many opportunities which they have enjoyed above others, of converting to God, their heart be-

comes harder; but the judgments of God, at laſt, break in upon them like an impetuous torrent. Unhappy miſcreants! Better had it been for them, that they had never been born.

But to proceed to the effect of Chriſt's words, which are thus related: 'As ſoon as Jeſus had 'ſaid to them, I am he, they went backward, 'and fell to the ground.' Such is the force of a ſingle word of the Lord Jeſus when accompanied with the effulgent beams of his Omnipotence, that, like a flaſh of lightning, it ſtrikes to the ground a body of armed ſoldiers. Chriſt in this inſtance diſplays

1. His Omnipotence. For without thunder or lightning, without ſpears or ſwords, by three monoſyllables only, 'I am he,' he ſtrikes to the ground ſuch a tumultuous crowd. This diſplay of the Divine Majeſty and Power ſhould convince our minds of the high dignity of the ſuffering Perſon, and that he is qualified to be the ſupreme Judge of the quick and the dead. For if theſe words 'I am he', ſpoken with a mild accent, had ſuch an aſtoniſhing force, what a dreadful thunder clap, in the ear of the trembling ſinner, will that fatal ſentence be, 'Depart from me, ye curſed!' If his words had ſuch effect when he was to be judged, what amazing power will he diſplay when he cometh to judge the world *.

Our bleſſed Saviour here alſo manifeſts

* *Quid judicaturus faciet, qui talia fecit judicandus?* AUGUSTINUS, Tom. IX. opp, f. 216.

2. His

2. His willingneſs to ſuffer. For from this proof of his Omnipotence it is evident, that it was in his power to have eaſily repulſed his enemies; but he only gives them a ſpecimen of his Almighty power, and, inſtead of doing them any farther hurt, permits them to ſtand up again: 'For the Son of Man came not to deſtroy mens 'lives but to ſave them (*r*).' As our bleſſed Lord, through the whole courſe of his miniſtry, had performed no miracle which tended to any one's detriment, but was pleaſed only to ſhew his judicial power on a herd of ſwine *, and a barren fig-tree, it is not to be ſuppoſed that he would now act otherwiſe, when he was reſigning himſelf to ſuffer. Hence we may learn the following particulars.

1. That even extraordinary events have not always power to move the obdurate hearts of men. Here an extraordinary miracle was wrought; but what good effect did it produce? Judas and his deſperate band were not deterred from their wicked purpoſes; but roſe up more incenſed becauſe they had been laid proſtrate on the ground: Nor were the other diſciples ſtrengthened in their faith, or confirmed againſt the offence of the Croſs, by this extraordinary event. How obdurate are the hearts

(*r*) Luke ix. 56.

* Gadara was a town belonging to the tribe of Gad, but given to the Greeks by Pompey. The neighbouring Jews carried on an illicit trade in hogs, for the ſubſiſtence of the Roman army, though ſtrictly forbidden by Hircanus and Ariſtobulus. This clears our bleſſed Lord from the injuſtice charged on him by modern infidels on account of this miracle. *W.*

of

of men, which, frequently, are not moved by the moſt glaring miracles!

2. One word of the Lord Jeſus can inſpire his ſervants with joy, and ſtrike a terror into the wicked. Theſe few words 'It is I' in a moment freed the hearts of the diſciples from fear on another occaſion (*s*); and here words of the ſame import * fill the hearts of the enemy with dread and conſternation.

3. The weakneſs of man is never more conſpicuous than when it oppoſes the Will of God. Of what ſervice to this great multitude are all the vain apparatus of ſtaves, ſwords, torches, *&c.* when they are employed againſt the power of Chriſt. Yet men are vain enough to boaſt of their ſtrength. A feather makes ſome little reſiſtance againſt a tempeſt; but here the diſproportion is infinitely greater. For 'all the 'nations, before God, are as nothing, and they 'are counted to him leſs than nothing (*t*). This awful conſideration ſhould move the potentates of the earth to ceaſe from ſtriving againſt God, and raging againſt Chriſt and his members, leſt they be thunder-ſtruck with theſe words, as Paul was, 'I am Jeſus whom thou perſe-'cuteſt (*s*).' The gracious promiſe which God has given to his church remains fixed and unchangeable, 'No weapon formed againſt thee 'ſhall proſper (*x*).' Bleſſed is he, who has ſuch an Almighty Being for his Lord, his patron,

(*s*) Matt. xiv 27. Luke xxiv. 39.
* The original words are the ſame in both places, ἐγω εἰμι. *W.*
(*t*) Iſa. xl. 17. (*u*) Acts ix. 5. (*x*) Iſa. liv. 17.

and

and protector, and is numbered among his friends! 'Who is he that will harm him, if he 'be a follower of that which is good (*y*)? The Prince of this world, how terrifying ſoever his appearance may be, is already judged, and cannot hurt or annoy us without the Divine Permiſſion.

THE PRAYER.

ALmighty Saviour, before whom all the wicked are ſcattered as chaff before the wind, may our hearts be ſo thoroughly convinced of thy tranſcendent power and greatneſs, that we may willingly lay ourſelves at thy feet, and worſhip thee, leſt thou deſtroy us by the blaſting of the breath of thy lips. Thou here ruleſt amongſt thine enemies; come and rule alſo in our hearts; and may that carnal mind, which is enmity againſt thee, be made thy footſtool. Grant that thy ſacred Word may not be unto us a ſavour of death unto death, but a ſavour of life unto life, for the ſake of thine infinite love. Amen.

CONSIDERATION IV.

A continuation of CHRIST'S *diſcourſe with his enemies.*

'(*a*) THEN aſked he them again, Whom 'ſeek ye? And they ſaid, Jeſus of Na-'zareth. Jeſus anſwered, I have told you, that I

(*y*) 1 Peter iii. 13. (*a*) John xviii. 7, 8, 9.

'am

'am He; if therefore, ye ſeek me, let theſe
'go their way; that the ſaying might be fulfilled,
'which he ſpake, Of thoſe whom thou gaveſt
'me, have I loſt none.'

This is the continuance of Chriſt's diſcourſe with his enemies; and ſhews us,

Firſt, That Chriſt is ſought a ſecond time.

Secondly, That he was found.

I.

The Evangeliſt, in relating how Chriſt was ſought a ſecond time, mentions,

1. The queſtion of the perſon ſought, 'Then
'aſked he them again, Whom ſeek ye?' In this narrative it is tacitly implied, that the Lord Jeſus had permitted his enemies to riſe up again, after the Almighty Power of his Word had laid them proſtrate on the ground. Having a little recovered themſelves from their conſternation, our bleſſed Lord obſerved by the light of their torches, that they were feeling about, as in the dark, without perceiving him; he therefore again, with an audible voice, repeats the former queſ-
'tion, Whom ſeek ye?' That if it were poſſible, they might be diverted from their evil purpoſes, and by conſidering with what a ſacred and powerful Perſon they had to do, be put on better thoughts. Then follows,

2. The anſwer of thoſe who were ſeeking him, 'They ſaid, Jeſus of Nazareth.' Thus, juſt after feeling the wonderful power of Chriſt, they perſiſted in their former anſwer, and execrable deſign. They were reſolved to apprehend

hend Jeſus of Nazareth at any rate. Hence ariſe the following obſervations.

1. On eſcaping any imminent danger, we ought to aſk our conſciences again, What future courſe of life we intend to lead? This we may learn from our Lord's behaviour on this occaſion. That very word, which had laid his enemies on the ground, might alſo have precipitated them into hell. Did the earth once open, and ſwallow up Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, with their adherents, for raiſing a ſedition againſt Moſes, who was only a ſervant of God? Much more might it now have opened wide its tremendous mouth, and ſwallowed theſe rebels, who were leagued together in ſuch a dreadful tumult againſt the Son of God himſelf, but were ſaved from this danger by Chriſt's long-ſuffering and patience. Hence the bleſſed Jeſus again puts the former queſtion to the multitude, to let them conſider whether they ſtill perſiſted in their horrid intention. How often are we ſaved from a manifeſt danger of our lives, or recovered from ſome dangerous diſeaſe, by the indulgent care of Divine Providence. Such a happy opportunity every one of us ſhould lay hold of, and put theſe queſtions to himſelf: "What is thy "preſent purſuit? How wilt thou now diſpoſe "of thyſelf? If God ſnatched ſuddenly thee "away in the midſt of thy ſins, thou wouldſt "have been now in the dark and diſmal priſon "of a wretched eternity. But as thou art ſtill "in the land of the living, How wilt thou "employ the precious remainder of thy time?

"What

" What thanks wilt thou render to thy gracious " Creator and Preſerver, for his forbearance and " long-ſuffering." Such an enquiry would probably have an happy influence on our lives.

2. It is a dangerous caſe to perſiſt in wicked deſigns, notwithſtanding repeated admonitions, to deter us from putting them in execution. The ſin of theſe men, without doubt, was greatly aggravated, becauſe they perſiſted in an impious deſign, after ſo evident and ſo ſenſible a conviction of the Divine Majeſty of Chriſt. But, alas! this tragedy is daily acted over again. How often does God call back many of us, when we have formed a deſign of committing ſome great ſin? How often does he remonſtrate to the conſcience, and aſk, " Unhappy man! What art " thou about? What advantage doſt thou ſeek " in ſinning? Thou wilt by no means attain " thine evil purpoſe." Yet with what eagerneſs and ardour is that ſin committed? How do we, time after time, renew our purpoſes of accompliſhing our impious deſires, though we have been once and again prevented, and ſometimes have ſuffered by making the attempt." This the Son of God here expiates, by permitting himſelf to be a ſecond time aſſaulted by his enemies, though they had already felt the effects of his Power. For in the ſufferings of Chriſt, we are always to obſerve, that in them is moſt plainly manifeſted the Divine juſtice of retaliation. As we ſin, in the ſame manner is our Surety puniſhed to expiate our ſins. Every circumſtance of our ſins ſuperinduced

duced a new circumſtance in his ſufferings. Who will therefore go on to commit any ſin, the expiation of which coſt the Son of God ſo much pain and ignominy.

II.

Chriſt being ſought a ſecond time, is found again.

Firſt, He here voluntarily ſurrenders himſelf up to ſufferings. 'I have told you that I 'am He.' Here he repeats his former confeſſion, and offers himſelf to the ſufferings appointed for him. Hence we learn,

1. That Chriſt, by his reiterated confeſſion of the truth, was to expiate our falſe evaſions and lies of neceſſity, as they are called. How ſhould we have behaved, had we been ſurrounded by an armed multitude ſent to apprehend us, but whoſe eyes God had blinded, that they ſhould not ſee us? Had any one of us been once and again aſked, Whether he was the perſon they ſought? would he not have had recourſe to falſhood; and to avoid the danger, have ſaid, I am not, or given ſome equivocal anſwer? But Chriſt immediately declares the truth, and ſhews himſelf that immaculate Lamb, in whoſe mouth was no deceit. This behaviour of the bleſſed Jeſus has alſo a reconciliatory power. This frank confeſſion of the truth in ſuch a terrifying exigency, when bonds and ſtripes, mockings and buffettings awaited him, was to expiate and atone for the many untruths and evaſions that proceed from our mouths.

2. Chriſt moſt willingly makes himſelf known to

to thoſe, who ſeek him from their hearts. Does our bleſſed Saviour permit himſelf to be found by thoſe who ſeek him with torches and ſwords to put him to death? How much more readily will he ſay to thoſe, who implore his bleſſings, and ſeek him with tears, 'Here I am'. Does he diſcover himſelf to thoſe who hate him, without a cauſe? With what ſatisfaction and complacency will he fulfil that gracious promiſe to a faithful ſoul, 'To him who loveth me will 'I manifeſt myſelf.' Thus our bleſſed Lord voluntarily ſurrendered himſelf to his ſufferings. But it is farther related,

Secondly, How he procures a diſmiſſion for his diſciples. This is to be conſidered, firſt, as an inſtance of his Omnipotence. 'If ye ſeek me, 'let theſe go their way.' Certainly theſe words greatly diſplay the Majeſty of Chriſt. This is no requeſt, for that would have been little attended to by the raging multitude, but a command. They are the words of one who could give law to his enemies. Before he gives up his hands to the cords, he, with his powerful word, binds his enemies hands, ſo that they ſhall not lay hold on his Diſciples, whom they certainly would not have ſpared, had they been permitted to follow the impulſe of their malice; eſpecially after Peter had ſmote with the ſword, and conſequently had more irritated the high Prieſt, whoſe ſervant had been wounded. This was the powerful paſſport, which he procured for his Diſciples; and was no leſs a miracle than that he wrought at the Creation, when he ſpoke to the mighty

mighty waters of the ſeas, 'Hitherto ſhalt thou 'come, and no farther; here ſhall thy proud waves 'be ſtaid:' For in theſe words, he controlls and ſets bounds to the turbulent rage of his enemies.

But this ſafe-conduct is alſo to be looked upon as an accompliſhment of his preceding prayer; which the Evangeliſt intimates, by adding, 'That the ſaying might be fulfilled, which he 'ſpake, Of thoſe whom thou haſt given me, 'have I loſt none.' Theſe words of St. John allude to the mediatorial prayer of Chriſt (*b*), in which, a few hours before, among other things, he had prayed for the preſervation of his poor diſciples. Chriſt in that pathetic prayer, unqueſtionably had his eye on ſomething much higher than the temporal preſervation of his diſciples; but that was included in it, and obtained in prayer, for the ſake of the ſpiritual. For had the diſciples then unhappily fallen into the enemy's hand, they would not only have periſhed in a natural way, but perhaps ſpiritually and eternally; as in ſome meaſure may be inferred from the example of Peter, who, in his diſtreſs, baſely denied his Maſter. Hence we learn,

1. That Chriſt, by his ſurrender of himſelf to ſuffer his whole Paſſion, procured our acquittal and diſcharge at the Divine Tribunal. This is included in thoſe words of love and tenderneſs; 'If ye ſeek me, let theſe go their way.' For though they immediately relate to his diſciples, yet in theſe words are alſo comprehended all his faithful confeſſors, who, through his divine

(*b*) John xvii. 12.

appointment, were to believe on him (*c*). That theſe may go free, he gives himſelf up in their ſtead. This was the end of his ſufferings, of which alſo the releaſe of the murderer Barabbas, inſtead of the bleſſed Jeſus, was a type. Hence the Prophet Iſaiah ſays, 'The chaſtiſement of 'our peace was upon him, and by his ſtripes 'we are healed.' He expoſes himſelf as a mark for the arrows of God's wrath to be diſcharged at, that we may be ſafe behind the impenetrable ſhield of his merit. He permits the curſe of the law to fall on himſelf, that we may inherit the bleſſing. He ſtands in our ſtead, and we in his. He was made a ſin-offering for us, that we might be made the righteouſneſs of God in him. This was the chief end and deſign of our Saviour's ſufferings.

2. The power or number of our enemies can never hurt us, unleſs it be by God's permiſſion. We, poor daſtardly creatures, are often withheld from doing our duty by the fear of drawing on ourſelves the emnity of our relations and compatriots, or the diſpleaſure of our patrons and benefactors; but why ſhould we be afraid of men? Were whole nations to riſe up againſt us, if Chriſt does but pronounce this ſentence of our deliverance, 'Let theſe go,' we ſhall be ſafe from their attempts. Why do we not much more fear Him, who can deſtroy both ſoul and body; Him who can ſay, 'Bind this man hand 'and foot, and caſt him into utter darkneſs.' Were even the gates of hell to pour forth the

(*c*) John xvii. 20.

armed

armed legions of darkneſs againſt us, they could not hurt a hair of our head, if Chriſt be our protector, and ſay to our enemies, 'Touch not 'mine anointed.'

3. Chriſt's prayer for his faithful ſervants is graciouſly accepted and heard by his heavenly Father. It was but a few hours before, that the Lord Jeſus had ſpoken theſe words; and behold, they are already accompliſhed: For they were the words of Him who could ſay with confidence, 'Father, I know that thou 'heareſt me always (*d*).' Now Chriſt had then not only prayed for his Diſciples and Apoſtles, but expreſsly (*e*) 'for thoſe, who through their 'word ſhould believe on him.' Therefore we alſo were in his generous heart; and that faithful High Prieſt then bore on his breaſt the names of all his ſpiritual Iſrael. Was he then ſo ſpeedily heard in this prayer for his Apoſtles, and ſhall not his prayer for the whole company of Believers be granted? The former is a ſure pledge of the latter. Therefore, as Luther ſays, "We "may juſtly write this comfortable text in "letters of gold, as it relates to us all. For "it is our glory and conſolation, our treaſure "and pearl; ſo that, for us Gentiles, the whole "Scriptures do not afford a more comfortable "ſaying than this."

4. Our merciful High Prieſt ſo orders our temporal circumſtances, that they may not hurt or endanger our ſouls. Of this we have here a plain proof; which ſhould excite in us

(*d*) John xi. 42. (*e*) John xvii. 20.

a firm aſſurance, that Chriſt is not unmindful of our outward circumſtances, and only cares for the ſoul. Thus he will not permit ſome Chriſtians to fall into extreme poverty, if he foreſees that their ſouls will ſuffer damage by it, as Agar (*f*) feared for himſelf. How inconſiderate are we! to place all our confidence in earthly patrons, in mortal men; and to make no account of this Almighty Patron, who has ſo affectionate, ſo tender a concern both for our temporal and eternal welfare.

THE PRAYER.

O Faithful and merciful Saviour! Thou who lookeſt on every ſoul, which the Father hath given thee, as a precious Jewel, and makeſt it thy concern to ſecure and return it to him unhurt at the laſt day; let this inſpire us with holy confidence, and exceeding joy, as knowing that no one can ſnatch us out of thine Almighty hand, and that thy mediatorial prayer will be fulfilled in us alſo, if we do but continue in thy ways. Keep us then as the apple of thine eye, that none of us may be loſt; but that, one day, we may be where thou art, and ſee thy tranſcendent glory. Grant this, O Lord, for the ſake of thy meritorious interceſſion. Amen.

(*f*) Prov. xxx. 9.

CON-

CONSIDERATION V.

CHRIST *is apprehended, and* Peter *defends him.*

'(*a*) THEN came they, and laid hands on 'Jeſus, and took him. When they 'who were with him ſaw what would follow, 'they ſaid unto him, Lord, ſhall we ſmite 'with the ſword? And, behold, one of them 'who were with Jeſus, namely, Simon Peter, 'having a ſword, ſtretched out his hand, and 'drew it, and ſmote a ſervant of the High Prieſt, 'and cut off his right ear: the ſervant's name 'was Malchus.'

Here is deſcribed

Firſt, The apprehending of Chriſt.

Secondly, Peter defending him.

I.

In this account of the apprehending of Chriſt is mentioned,

1. What preceded it, 'Then came they, '&c.' Who were theſe that came? undoubtedly the ſoldiers and officers who, at the deſire of the chief Prieſts and Elders, had been ſent thither. Theſe men, indeed, were not all of one claſs. Some of them, poſſibly, from a blind zeal, were glad to be employed in this buſineſs; eſpecially the officers of the High Prieſt and Phariſees, who, from the continual invectives of their maſters againſt Jeſus of Nazareth, were

(*a*) Matt. xxvi. 50, 51. Mark xiv. 46, 47. Luke xxii. 49, 50. John. xviii. 10.

unqueſtionably poſſeſſed with the vileſt prejudices againſt his perſon. Others bore a part in this tragedy only from an implicit obedience to the command of their ſuperiors, of whom it may be ſaid, as of Abſalom's companions, 'They 'went in their ſimplicity (*b*).' Thus our bleſſed Lord afterwards ſaid of the Roman ſoldiers who nailed him to the Croſs, 'They know not 'what they do.' It is here farther related how they treated our bleſſed Saviour. For

2. 'They laid hands on Jeſus, and took him.' Thus they followed the advice of their treacherous guide, 'whomſoever I ſhall kiſs, the ſame 'is he, take him, and lead him away ſafely.' From theſe words it is eaſy to infer with what rude violence they gathered about the ſacred Perſon of our bleſſed Redeemer, and how barbarouſly they hurried him away; eſpecially, as they had been ſo ſhamefully diſappointed before, notwithſtanding their ſwords and ſpears, and with a ſingle ſentence thrown proſtrate on the ground. This ſharpened their keen malice, and deſire of revenge, ſo that they were like bees, which, when provoked, ruſh in outrageous ſwarms on thoſe they attack with their envenomed ſtings. This compariſon the Pſalmiſt applies to the Meſſiah, when he ſays, 'They compaſſed me about like bees (*c*).' Hence may be drawn the following inferences.

1. It is a melancholy ſign of obduracy, to ſin immediately after having felt God's chaſtiſing hand. Scarce were theſe men riſen up who

(*b*) 2 Sam. xv. 11. (*c*) Pſalm cxviii. 12.

had been thrown to the ground by the word of Chriſt, but they immediately make up to him to apprehend him. It was juſt ſo with Pharoah; he ſcarce began to breathe after a grievous plague from the Lord, but his haughtineſs returned: And ſo it is with the generality of mankind. While they feel the hand of God heavy upon them, drying up their moiſture and conſuming their ſtrength by a lingering diſeaſe, they ſeem very obſequious and ſubmiſſive; but as they reſume their ſtrength and ſpirits, their obſtinacy and depravity likewiſe increaſe. They often riſe worſe from their ſick bed, than when they were laid upon it by God's viſitation. This is indeed a ſign of extreme hardneſs and impenitence of heart; and ſuch a one may ſoon expect ſeverer chaſtiſements. There is no ſtate ſo dangerous as that when God ſmites them, and they feel not his friendly corrections.

2. It is a judgment from God on a ſinner, when his wicked intentions are permitted to ſucceed. Wicked men, indeed, put another conſtruction upon it, 'the wicked boaſteth of [ob-'taining] his heart's deſire, and ſpeaketh good of 'the covetous (*d*).' This he looks upon as a mark of the Divine favour, and as a token that his wicked ways pleaſe the Lord. It is true, the chief Prieſts and Phariſees did not a little exult on this occaſion. They had long waited in vain for an opportunity of laying hands on our bleſſed Lord (*e*). But now, it is ſaid, 'They laid

(*d*) Pſ. x. 3. (*e*) Luke xx. 19. John x. 39.

'hands on Jeſus, and took him,' which gave them great ſatisfaction.

3. It is to Chriſt's being ſeized as a priſoner, that we owe our ſpiritual freedom. We ſee in the perſon of Chriſt how deſperate our caſe would have been. Thus ſhould we have been ſiezed, bound, and dragged along by a multitude of evil ſpirits, for having once given up ourſelves as voluntary ſlaves to Satan. We ſhould have been eternally kept as miſerable captives and priſoners by him at his will (*f*). For our freedom could no other way be obtained but by our Redeemer and Surety, who appeared in our ſtead, and exchanged his bliſsful freedom for a wretched impriſonment. Therefore to his bonds we owe our manumiſſion. Oh that we may rightly uſe this ineſtimable benefit purchaſed for us at ſo dear a rate, caſt off the yoke of ſin and Satan, and with willing and thankful hearts, ſerve the great Reſtorer of our liberty during the whole courſe of our lives!

II.

Moreover, an account is here given of the defence made by Peter in order to reſcue his Maſter, and prevent his being carried away by the multitude. Mention is here made, firſt, of the attempt itſelf; and ſecondly, of the behaviour of Peter.

The perſons who attempted to reſcue our bleſſed Saviour, and prevent his being carried away, were thoſe about him, namely, his diſ-

(*f*) 2 Tim. ii. 26.

ciples;

ciples; who had, all along, imagined that Chriſt would ſave himſelf by flight, and paſs through the crowd of his enemies, as he had done at other times (*g*). But when they ſaw that the affair took a ſerious turn, and that their Maſter was actually in the hands of his enemies, they then thought it was high time to reſcue him, and do ſomething in his defence. Therefore they aſked him, 'Lord ſhall we ſmite with the 'ſword?' In this proceeding there was ſomething commendable, and ſomething to be blamed. They were to be commended for aſking this previous queſtion; for, probably they remembered Chriſt's reiterated precepts of patience and reſignation. But on the other hand, they were blameable for making ſuch a mad attempt, and with two ſwords, which were all they had, to make head againſt a ſtrong party of ſoldiers. This, however, ſeems to have proceeded from their miſunderſtanding theſe words of Chriſt, 'let him that hath no ſword ſell his 'garment and buy one (*h*).' By this our Saviour intimates, That they ſhould come into ſuch dangerous circumſtances, as to be like perſons travelling among robbers, and therefore would have more need of a ſword than garments; that they ſhould be deprived, as out-laws, of the protection of magiſtrates, who bear the ſword for the protection and ſafety of the innocent; and that they were to ſuffer all kinds of outrages *. But

(*g*) John viii. 59. (*h*) Luke xxii. 36.

* *Sic imperativi ſæpe accipiuntur prophetici.* Vid. Iſa. ii. 10, 19. xlvii. 1. 5.

he

he by no mean ſays, that they muſt handle the ſword, and raſhly make uſe of it. Hence we may learn,

1. That the motions of anger and revenge, in the time of outward ſufferings, are to be looked upon as the moſt dangerous aſſaults of Satan. Theſe paſſions riſe in us very naturally. Carnal reaſon pretends, that God does not immediately come down from heaven to our aſſiſtance, but that proper means muſt be uſed. This reaſoning is right; but we are apt to make uſe of the wrong means, namely, temporal arms and illicit ſtratagems, and forget that in our Chriſtian warfare we are called to ſufferings. Theſe vehement impulſes of paſſion our bleſſed Lord was here to expiate, by the extreme concern which he expreſſed on this account with regard to his diſciples. But he has alſo acquired ſtrength for us to ſtruggle with theſe motions, and to check and overcome the incitements to private revenge.

2. The hour of ſuffering is the teſt, which diſplays the inward diſpoſition of the heart. The diſciples might, at other times, reflect with ſome degree of ſurpriſe, how mild and gentle they were become. But now it appears how ſhort-lived their patience was; for immediately they are for making uſe of violent means to reſcue their Maſter. Many of us imagine that we are ſettled in a courſe of goodneſs, and think ourſelves poſſeſſed of the virtues of patience and eqanimity. Therefore God permits us ſometimes to fall into ſuch circumſtances, by which the

the moſt inward frame of our minds is laid open. If ſuch a one conceits himſelf very humble, God permits ſome great affair to proſper in his hands, for which he is highly applauded; and then the ſpirit of vanity immediately begins to ſtir. Does he imagine himſelf poſſeſſed of extraordinary patience and mildneſs? God permits him to be offended by others; and then his impetuous nature immediately betrays itſelf. When God gives a man an opportunity of knowing himſelf, it ought to be looked upon as a mark of his favour, and ſhould be well uſed. A man under ſuch circumſtances ſhould commune with himſelf, take a general review of his whole heart, and ſearch whether any more miſtakes be lurking there; and theſe he muſt encounter, overcome, and carefully exterminate.

Secondly, here alſo is deſcribed the behaviour of Simon Peter, who was with Jeſus, and ſtood by. A remarkable deſcription, by which we may conceive, how near it muſt have concerned our bleſſed Saviour that one of his diſciples ſhould commit ſuch a fault; and he was the very perſon whom he had ſo often warned againſt raſhneſs, violence, and preſumption. But Peter continued the ſame man; and being conſcious of an entire love for his Lord and Maſter, he proceeded, without conſidering whether he made uſe of the proper means to execute his good intentions.

The manner of his executing his deſign was alſo very violent and impetuous. The inſtrument which he made uſe of was a ſword. How

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he came by it, is not neceſſary to be enquired into. It is certain it was not cuſtomary for the diſciples to wear ſwords. Hence ſome are of opinion, that it was no more than a large knife, with which he had before killed the paſchal lamb. But others, with more probability, think that the diſciples on the way from Galilee to Jeruſalem, which was very much infeſted with robbers and aſſaſſins, had provided themſelves with two ſwords; and that they carried them to Geſthemanè, in order to defend themſelves againſt the dangers they were apprehenſive of. One of theſe ſwords 'Peter drew out of the ſheath.' He did not ſtay for his Maſter's anſwer to his queſtion; but, according to his uſual warmth and precipitancy, was forthwith ready; for he was deſirous of being beforehand with the multitude. We may ſuppoſe, that he now recollected the promiſe he had made, and thought that ſomething was to be riſqued in deliverance of his Maſter, leſt it ſhould ſeem to be mere words. Then ſeeing the multitude lay their hands on Jeſus, he was reſolved to ſhew his courage; he drew his ſword. But this was not all; 'he 'ſmote a ſervant of the High Prieſt, and cut off 'his ear.' This man, poſſibly, ſhewed himſelf remarkably forward and eager in apprehending the Lord Jeſus; and therefore Peter falls on him firſt. Probably his intention was to cleave his head aſunder; but Chriſt averted the preſumptuous ſtroke, ſo that it only cut off his ear. This temerity afterwards coſt Peter dear, when a kinſman

kinſman of this Malchus put him into no ſmall conſternation (*i*). Hence we learn,

1. That a good intention or deſign, when conducted by a blind zeal and temerity, often occaſions a great deal of evil. That Peter meant well on this occaſion, cannot be queſtioned. He probably concluded, that now was the time for giving a public proof of his love to his Maſter. But in reality it proved otherwiſe; for he only increaſed the ſufferings of Chriſt, injured his cauſe, and brought him into a ſuſpicion of rebellious deſigns; as if he had taught his diſciples to repel force by force, and oppoſe the government. Thus he gave a handle to the enemies of his Maſter, to charge him with ſtirring up the people. It may eaſily be conceived, that our bleſſed Lord was very much concerned at this procedure. However, by this he atoned for all blind and irrational zeal, and for the ſins of thoſe who rely on their own imaginary good intentions, if they repent of ſuch ſins in due time. Let us therefore ſeriouſly conſider, that a good intention does not make a bad cauſe good, and acceptable to God; and that a good cauſe ſhould alſo be conducted in a juſt and legal manner.

2. It is a point of great wiſdom under ſufferings, to look to the hand of God, and not to man. Had Peter done this; had he thought on God's immutable decree, with regard to the ſufferings of the Meſſiah, and that man could have no power over our bleſſed Lord, unleſs it were given from above; he would have let his

(*i*) John xviii. 26.

ſword

ſword reſt in its place. But alas! we act no better; nay, if a man under ſufferings be exhorted to look up to God for redreſs, a diſpute immediately ariſes, and the ſuffering party is apt to maintain, that it is allowable to repel force by force. Thus carnal reaſon will be always making ſhifts and evaſions; whereas the neareſt way to extricate ourſelves out of calamity is to adore the mighty Hand of God that preſſeth us, and to humble ourſelves under it.

3. God ſo over-rules the faults of his ſervants, that no greater damage enſues from them than he has determined to permit. Here the Omnipotence of Chriſt turns aſide Peter's raſh blow, ſo that it only cuts off an ear. Thus novices in religion frequently commit many faults, which God, for wiſe purpoſes, is pleaſed to permit; but ſo tempers and reſtrains them, that his cauſe may not be greatly injured by them. How gracious is the Lord, who ſpreads out his hands to ſupport us, when we fall inadvertently.

4. The faults of thoſe Chriſtians that are weak, ought not to be charged on religion in general. We may be ſure Chriſt was blamed and cenſured for this action of Peter, his diſciple. This, ſaid they among themſelves, is a ſpecimen of the doctrines of this Jeſus of Nazareth. This is one of his old diſciples; and where ſhould he have learned ſuch behaviour, but from his Maſter? But who will preſume to ſay, that the enemies of Chriſt argued rightly on this occaſion? Yet this is the way of the world, when any religious perſon commits a fault, Chriſtianity in general is reproached with it.

THE

THE PRAYER.

ETernal thanks be aſcribed to thee, moſt faithful Saviour, for thy patience, long-ſuffering, and forbearance towards thy poor children. May we alſo partake of it amidſt our temerity and impatience, our proneneſs to anger and revenge! Caſt us not from thee for our manifold infirmities; but by thy Holy Spirit continually ſtrengthen us, and make us more patient, wiſe, and conſiderate, ſo that we may reflect honour on thy holy Religion, and make our light to ſhine before men. Amen.

CONSIDERATION VI.

CHRIST'S *mild reproof to his diſciples.*

'(*a*) BUT Jeſus anſwered and ſaid, Suffer 'ye thus far. And he touched his ear, 'and healed him. Then ſaid Jeſus unto Peter, 'Put up thy ſword into the ſheath; for all they 'that take the ſword ſhall periſh with the 'ſword. The cup which the Father hath given 'me, ſhall I not drink it? Thinkeſt thou that I 'cannot now pray to my Father, and he ſhall 'preſently give me more than twelve legions of 'Angels? But how then ſhall the Scriptures be 'fulfilled, that thus it muſt be?'

By theſe words we find, that Chriſt reproved his diſciples, who were for repelling force by force; and this he does,

(*a*) Matt. xxvi. 52, 53, 54. Luke xxii. 51. John xxviii. 11.

Firſt,

First, By his action.
Secondly, By his words.

I.

The action was, first, our bleſſed Lord's kind reparation of the fault imprudently committed by Peter, by healing the ear which he had cut off. Here we may obſerve,

1. The preparation to the action. Jeſus ſaid, 'Suffer ye thus far.' Some, indeed, ſuppoſe, that Chriſt addreſſed theſe words to his diſciples, enjoining them not to oppoſe the accompliſhment of his ſufferings, but to permit the Roman ſoldiers to fulfil what the Father had decreed concerning him. But his diſcourſe ſeems rather directed to the ſoldiers, 'Forbear whilſt * ——,' as if he intreated, and at the ſame time commanded them to leave his hands at liberty, until he had healed the man's ear.

2. The action itſelf. 'And he touched his 'ear.' It was uſual with the Lord Jeſus to touch thoſe diſeaſed perſons whom he cured, and by his miraculous touch to impart his healing virtue to them (*b*); by this he ſhewed, that his human nature was endued with the fulneſs of ſalvation and power. Thus, in this inſtance, by touching the ear, it is reſtored in its place, and in a miraculous manner inſtantaneouſly healed. By this miracle he intended to give an actual demonſtration, that he by no means approved of Peter's indiſcreet zeal. Hence we may draw the following edifying inferences.

1. The ſervices and benefits, which we do to others,

* Εατε ἑως τουτου. *Permittite, ſinite uſque dum, ſcilicet donec hunc ſanavero. W.* (*b*) Matt. viii. 3. ix. 29.

others, muſt be accompanied with an affectionate behaviour. When Chriſt, in this inſtance, was for exerting his benevolence, he previouſly, in the mildeſt terms, intreated his enemies, that they would a little while forbear binding his ſacred hands, and allow him juſt time to repair the damage which had been inadvertently done. Wordlings and courtiers are perfect maſters of this art; and accompany all the favours which they do to others, with every engaging circumſtance, with every thing that can tend to make them be idolized by others. But this courtly complaiſance proceeds from falſe and ſelfiſh views: Whereas true Chriſtians are to obſerve it from purer motives; and when they do any ſpiritual or temporal kindneſſes to others, they ſhould by their affability, meekneſs, and diſcretion, ſo prepare their minds, that the kindneſs ſhewn them may have the deſired effect. This ſeems, indeed, to be only a rule of outward conduct in life: But the obſervance of it requires a conſiderable portion of Divine Grace; and certainly it muſt coſt us no ſmall ſhare of ſelf-denial, ſo to behave towards our neighbour, who ſtands in need of our aſſiſtance, as if we accounted it a favour, that he will accept of our good offices.

2. Our bleſſed Saviour often repairs the damages, raſhly committed by his imprudent diſciples. Of this we have here an example in the healing of the ear, which had been cut off. The children of God ſhould indeed behave with circumſpection in all things, and be the more cautious, as ſo many eyes are intent in watching

them; and on any ſlip of theirs, as many ſlanderous tongues are ready to blazon abroad their ſhame. Though Chriſtians muſt ſuffer themſelves to be reproached by the world, as if they accounted themſelves quite perfect and infallible; yet none more ingenuouſly acknowledge, that they fail in many things, and that they ſtand in need of a merciful Mediator, not only to plead their cauſe before the Divine Tribunal, but alſo to correct their failings, and make them obtain favour with men. Thus we ſhould in all our actions proceed with prudence and caution, and reflect that we walk among ſnares. But when it does happen, that we inadvertently make a falſe ſtep, we ought not to be utterly diſcouraged. As Satan is particularly watchful over ſouls of a melancholy diſpoſition; is very dexterous in magnifying the dangers ariſing from their failings, and the puniſhment to be apprehended from them; we ſhould turn away our eyes from the ſubtile tempter, and ſay, "It is not againſt thee that I "have ſinned, but againſt my indulgent Crea-"tor; beſides, I have a merciful Saviour, who "can again make good what I have erred in." Thus, after a ſincere repentance for the fault we have raſhly committed, let us lay hold on the merits of Chriſt by faith, and chearfully proceed to follow after peace and holineſs of life.

3. To do good to our enemies, is an important point in our imitation of Jeſus Chriſt in his ſufferings. Here the bleſſed Jeſus with his healing hand touches his ear, who had ſtretched out his impious hand to ſeize and bind him. This

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was a pattern of true meekneſs and patience. This bitter enemy of our bleſſed Lord had well deſerved to have the hand which he had ſtretched out to lay hold of him withered, as the hand of Jeroboam was, when he ſignified his order for ſeizing the Prophet (*c*): For certainly one greater than a Prophet was here. But the meek and merciful Saviour over-looks all the outrages committed againſt him, touches the wounded ear, and with a touch, heals it. Should any one of us have behaved with ſuch unparalleled mildneſs? It is hardly probably that we would. Alas! with what difficulty does that leſſon, 'Love your enemies, do good to thoſe that 'hate you,' find admiſſion into the human heart! The bare abſtaining from avenging ourſelves, is a hard and diſagreeable taſk to fleſh and blood, which is ſo prone to revenge. The leaſt offence againſt a poor worm is often atoned for by blood; whereas God is offended every day, and yet is patient and long-ſuffering. But to love our enemies, and even to do them good, is what we can hardly digeſt. It is certain, that to the undiſcerning multitude it would appear highly ridiculous and abſurd, (eſpecially whilſt the ſenſe and pain of the injury is ſtill recent) ſhould any one ſay to them, Your enemy who injured you is at preſent in great want; be ſo charitable as to go and aſſiſt him. The anſwer would be, How! ſhall I help him? I muſt be a fool, indeed, to do him any good office, who has done me ſo much injury; ſhall I encourage him in his

(*c*) 1 Kings xiii. 4.

wickedneſs? Should it be replied to ſuch a man in his reſentment, But Chriſt has commanded us to do good to our enemies, he would laugh his adviſer to ſcorn, and ſay, if any one will be ſuch a fool, he deſerves to be ill-treated, *&c.* Behold, thus the doctrines that proceeded from the mouth of our Divine Teacher are ridiculed among thoſe who call themſelves Chriſtians! though they are highly rational, and agreeable to the principles of real prudence.

II.

Chriſt having repaired the fault committed by his ſanguine diſciples, he reproves them likewiſe with words, which, though they were particularly directed to Peter, yet were ſpoken ſo as to be heard by the other diſciples. In this reproof is contained,

Firſt, A command: 'Put up the ſword in 'its ſheath.' In theſe words, our bleſſed Lord, 1. diſapproves of what Peter had done; as if he had ſaid, Away with the ſword; do not vainly think to defend me with weapons. 2. He reſtrains him from proceeding to further violence; for otherwiſe Peter, in his rage, would not have ſtopped at this firſt attempt. It was to reſcue his Maſter, that he had drawn his ſword; but Chriſt here in commanding him to put up his ſword into its place, immediately calms his fury and indignation. To this command, our bleſſed Lord immediately ſubjoins,

Secondly, The motives which ſhould induce Peter to comply with this command.

1. He

1. He repreſents to him the danger of his procedure: 'For all they that take the ſword 'ſhall periſh with the ſword.' To take the ſword is, in an illegal manner, to aſſume the power of uſing the ſword for revenge. God has committed the ſword to the civil magiſtrate (*d*); and whoever intrudes on his office, as it were, takes the ſword out of his hand. Of ſuch a one, it is here ſaid, 'he ſhall periſh by the ſword,' *i. e.* the civil power will be under a neceſſity of uſing the ſword againſt him, and, as he has ſhed man's blood, of retaliating the injury on him (*e*). Thus Chriſt repreſents to Peter the danger of his raſh attempt, namely, how eaſily he might have taken away the life of the high Prieſt's ſervant, and conſequently have fallen into the hand of the civil power, and be puniſhed as an aſſaſſin or an evil doer.

2. Our bleſſed Lord repreſents to him, that this proceeding is unbecoming and ſinful, as it tended to obſtruct him in his obedience to his Father, and his great deſign, *viz.* the redemption of mankind; 'The cup which my Father has 'given me, ſhall I not drink it?' He often calls his ſufferings a cup (*f*); by which expreſſion, according to the opinion of ſome commentators, he alludes to a capital puniſhment among the Ancients, of giving malefactors a cup filled with a poiſonous draught *. Theſe ſufferings, he conſiders as ſent by his Father, who, accord-

(*d*) Rom. xiii. 4. (*e*) Gen. ix. 6. (*f*) Matt. xx. 22. in loco, &c.

* This puniſhment was in uſe among the Athenians, as appears by the death of *Socrates*, &c. *W.*

ing to his predetermined counſel, had appointed them (*g*); and therefore he aſks, Shall I not ſubmit? Shall I withdraw myſelf from them, after having in the council of the Father offered myſelf for this purpoſe? Bluſh Peter, that thou wouldeſt, as it were, by violence, make me break my promiſe.

3. Chriſt ſhews him, that this reſiſtance is unneceſſary: 'Thinkeſt thou that I cannot now 'pray to my Father, and he ſhall preſently give 'me more than twelve legions of Angels?' As if he had ſaid, I do not ſtand in any need of your defence; were I inclined to it, I might have a much more powerful aſſiſtance. It is but ſpeaking the word, and I could have of my Father, inſtead of twelve Apoſtles, twelve legions of Angels; and conſequently a formidable hoſt, which in an inſtant could diſſipate all the power of mine enemies. A ſingle Angel ſlew an hundred eighty and five thouſand in the camp of the Aſſyrians (*h*); what then would not twelve legions, or fifty thouſand Angels, be able to perform?

4. He repreſents to him, that it is impoſſible to accompliſh his deſign: 'Thus it muſt be.' As if our Lord had ſaid, God has determined it, and foretold it in the holy Scriptures. Now God cannot act contrary to his word, nor forfeit his veracity. Beſides, the human race can be redeemed in no other manner, at leaſt my Father has choſen this method; therefore, to endeavour to obſtruct the wiſe Decree of God

(*g*) Acts ii. 23. (*h*) 2 Kings xix. 35.

would

would be a vain and fruitleſs attempt. This argument muſt at laſt have carried with it a deciſive force. Hence let us learn the following truths.

1. The Lord Jeſus, indeed, forgives his ſervants their ſins, but at the ſame time reproves their evil intentions (*i*). The error committed by Peter, and the other diſciples, in theſe embarraſſed circumſtances were pardoned; however, they did not go without a mild reproof: but our bleſſed Saviour afterwards upbraided them no farther about it. He knoweth our frame and all its weakneſſes. God indulgently pardons the failings of his poor ſervants; eſpecially when they are under difficulties and afflictions, and the world is moſt void of pity and compaſſion. It often happens in times of perſecution that ſome indiſcretions are committed by Chriſtians, which are graciouſly forgiven by the Father of mercies, but are by no means to be juſtified or commended. It is a great conſolation to Chriſtians under their ſufferings, that they have a merciful High Prieſt, who, with the merit of his meekneſs and patience, atones for the errors they commit under the preſſure of afflictions and perſecutions.

2. Our reproofs of our neighbour ſhould proceed from a concern for his welfare, mixt with mildneſs and gentleneſs. Chriſt had ſufficient cauſe to give Peter a ſharp reprimand, and to reproach him with the injury he did his cauſe; to ſhew him how he brought a blot on his in-

(*i*) Pſalm xcix. 18.

nocence, and that the High Prieſt's ſervant could not have ſo much ſuffered, as Chriſt himſelf, by his violence. But our bleſſed Lord contents himſelf with alledging the reaſons, why he could not approve of his raſhneſs, charging him not to proceed in his indiſcretion. He is not ſilent on the occaſion, as his enemies would then have immediately concluded that he approved of the action; neither does his diſapprobation carry him beyond the bounds of meekneſs and gentleneſs. It is particularly remarkable, that our Saviour does not reproach Peter with having aggravated his ſuffering by this action, which, in fact, was the caſe. In this our bleſſed Lord ſets us an example of patience, when his children ſhould endure ſufferings by the indiſcretion of their acquaintance, or of thoſe with whom they are connected.

3. In order to ſtand our ground in time of ſufferings, we are not to conſider the inſults of men, but the hand of God that ſends them. When our Saviour ſays 'Shall I not drink the cup 'which my father hath given me?' he directs Peter's thoughts from the hand of men, or the inſtruments, to the counſels of God, who had appointed theſe ſufferings for him. This conſideration ſhould make us patient under ſufferings; for if we conſider by whom they are ſent on us, it will ſweeten the bittereſt potion. It is a cup mixed by the healing hand of our heavenly Father, who does not prepare poiſon for his children, but the moſt efficacious medicine.

4. To

4. To acquieſce in the ſufferings ſent by God is a ſign of great increaſe in holineſs. Chriſt ſays 'Shall I not drink the cup?' This is of the ſame import with that paſſage of Scripture, 'I will 'receive the cup of ſalvation (*k*).' It is from our Saviour's complacency in his ſufferings, that he diſapproves of Peter's attempt to hinder them. When this love is ſhed abroad in the heart of a Chriſtian, he chearfully ſubmits to ſuffer for Chriſt's ſake; for he is ſenſible that by ſuch an acquieſcence, he acquires a brighter jewel in his future crown of glory.

5. In the greateſt ſufferings, it is an inexpreſſible comfort to the ſervants of God to reflect, that they have a Saviour to whom all the Angels of God are miniſtering Spirits. Here our bleſſed Lord declines the ſervice of Angels, and will not accept of their aſſiſtance, becauſe the deciſſive hour of his ſuffering was now come. But he has by this means acquired for us the protection of Angels in our ſufferings. He now is in an exalted ſtate, in which Angels, Principalities, and Powers, are ſubject to him, and reverentially adore the Human Nature united with the Godhead. When a Chriſtian is in any great danger or affliction, he conſiders that his Saviour has numberleſs legions of Angels under his command, and that he will ſend away one of thoſe glorious meſſengers to help or ſupport him in his diſtreſs. 'For the Angel of the Lord en-'campeth round about them that fear him, 'and delivereth them (*l*);' and theſe miniſter-

(*k*) Pſalm cxvi. 13. (*l*) Pſalm xxxiv. 7.

ing

ing Spirits are ſent forth, to miniſter to thoſe who are heirs of ſalvation (*m*).

THE PRAYER.

THANKS be to thee, O my Saviour, who wouldeſt not permit the courſe of thy ſufferings to be obſtructed, leſt at the ſame time my redemption and ſalvation ſhould be prevented. Praiſed be thy name for this chearful readineſs to drink of thy cup of ſufferings for the welfare of all mankind, that I might not eternally drink the phials of God's wrath, and the lees of his bitter cup. Grant that I may patiently and willingly ſubmit to all ſufferings for thy ſake, and let thy holy Angels aſſiſt and ſupport me under them. Amen.

CONSIDERATION VII.

CHRIST *is bound, and his remonſtrance to his enemies.*

'(*a*) THEN the band, and the captain, and 'the officers of the Jews, took Jeſus, 'and bound him. In the ſame hour Jeſus 'ſaid to the chief Prieſts, and Captains of the 'temple, and the Elders, who were come to 'him, Are ye come out, as againſt a thief, with 'ſwords and ſtaves to take me?'

Theſe words exhibit to us,

(*m*) Heb. i. 14. (*a*) Matt. xxvi. 55. Mark xiv. 48. Luke xxii. 52. John xviii. 12.

Firſt,

First, The binding of Chriſt.
Secondly, His remonſtrance.

I.

In the binding of Chriſt, are to be obſerved,

1, The inſtruments of this cruelty; who were,

First, The multitude, namely, of the Roman Soldiers, who were in garriſon in Antony's caſtle, and during this high feſtival, were to watch the temple to prevent any inſurrection (*b*).

Secondly, The Captain, or Commander in chief. Though it is not probable that the whole body was ordered on this ſervice, but only a part; yet the Commander in chief was preſent.

Thirdly, the officers of the Jews, *i. e.* the officers of the Jewiſh Sanhedrim, and other domeſtics of the Scribes and Phariſees, who had been ſent by their maſters, of which I have already taken notice in the firſt Conſideration *; ſo that Chriſt was ſurrounded by a numerous body of men.

2. The cruel action itſelf. 'They took Je-'ſus,' or they laid hold on him on all ſides, and ſo hemmed him in that he might not eſcape, and 'bound him.' With what rudeneſs and violence this was done, may be conjectured from the following prophecy (*c*) 'Many bulls 'have compaſſed me, ſtrong bulls of Baſhan 'have beſet me round: They gaped upon me 'with their mouths as a ravening, and a roaring 'lion.' 'They compaſſed me about like bees '—They thruſt ſore at me that I might fall (*d*)'.

(*b*) Acts xxi. 30, &c.
(*c*) Pſalm xxii. 12, 13.
* In page 125.
(*d*) Pſalm. cxviii. 12, 13.

This

This binding muſt have been the more painful; our bleſſed Saviour having, but a little before, been extremely weakened by his violent agony and bloody ſweat, when he lay with his face on the ground, and, as it were, rolled in his blood; when the ſorrows of hell compaſſed him about, and the ſnares of death prevented him (*e*). And now alſo theſe barbarous, inhuman ſoldiers came on him, and bound him with cords. We ſhall here make the following practical obſervations.

1. The greater love any one has for Chriſt, the more attentive will he be in conſidering the particular circumſtances of his ſufferings. John, the diſciple whom Jeſus loved, and who loved Jeſus with a moſt ardent affection, is the only Evangeliſt who takes notice of the binding of our Saviour. An affectionate ſoul does not only conſider the ſufferings of Chriſt in general, but dwells on every circumſtance of his meritorious paſſion.

2. Chriſt and his members are ſtill looked upon by the men of this world, as people whom they cannot treat with too much ſeverity. It is ſaid, 'They took Jeſus.' Thus the world deals with his members; for they are meek and patient, not repelling force by force, do not return railing for railing; but, according to the pattern ſet by their Lord and Maſter, tamely reſign themſelves to ſufferings. Therefore the world is eager to abuſe their patience and heroic ſubmiſſion. "Let us, ſay they, examine him with deſpite-

(*e*) Pſalm xviii. 5.

"fulneſs

" fulneſs and torture, that we may know his " meekneſs, and prove his patience (*f*)." But woe to him! who ſuffers himſelf to be employed as an inſtrument of the devil in ſuch execrable doings; for however patiently Chriſtians may bear all things, there is another who will certainly avenge them.

3. The minuteſt circumſtance in the ſufferings of Chriſt receive an importance from the dignity of the ſuffering perſon. He, who is here bound, is the 'Captain of the Lord's hoſt (*g*), 'the Prince of the Kings of the earth (*h*).' Here thoſe hands are fettered, which ſpread out the heavens, and founded the earth, which looſen the bands of Orion (*i*); thoſe hands, which never did any hurt, or rather thoſe hands which are continually open to ſatisfy every living thing with plenteouſneſs; thoſe hands whoſe all-healing touch had cleanſed ſo many leapers, and reſtored feet to the lame, and eyes to the blind. We muſt attentively conſider theſe particulars, before we can ſet a due value on the bonds of Chriſt. This is the method the Holy Spirit obſerves in foretelling the ſufferings and contemptuous treatment of the Meſſiah. He is firſt introduced ſpeaking in this manner: (*k*) 'At my 'rebuke I dry up the ſea: I make the rivers a 'wilderneſs:—— I clothe the heavens with 'blackneſs; and I make ſackcloth their cover-'ing——.' Then follows (*l*) 'I gave my 'back to the ſmiters, and my cheeks to them

(*f*) Wiſdom ii. 19. (*g*) Joſ. v. 14. (*h*) Rev. i. 5.
(*i*) Job xxxviii. 31. (*k*) Iſaiah l. 2, 3. (*l*) ver. 6.

'that

'that plucked off the hair: I hid not my face 'from ſhame and ſpitting.' Thus ſhould we conſider every circumſtance of Chriſt's ſufferings.

4. By the bonds of the Son of God, our love of an unbounded freedom was to be expiated. In order rightly to conſider theſe bonds of Chriſt, we muſt look back to the garden of Eden; where our greateſt happineſs conſiſted in an implicit obedience to God, a dependence on him, and a reſignation of ourſelves to be drawn by him with cords of love. But theſe happy bonds we impiouſly caſt away from us; we would be our own maſters, and were above being in a ſtate of dependence. We broke aſunder the gentle bonds of obedience, tranſgreſſed both Tables of the law, and made ourſelves ſervants to Satan, being ſold under ſin (*m*). This forbidden and ſinful luſt of an unlimited freedom brought theſe bonds upon our bleſſed Saviour, who was bound in our ſtead.

5. Whoever conſiders the bonds of Chriſt, in faith, is thereby moved to a voluntary obedience to his commands. The Scripture ſays, 'the love of Chriſt conſtraineth us * (*n*)'. Hence we may learn to eſteem it an honour to ſerve the Lord Chriſt, whoſe ſervice is perfect freedom; and if we were left to an entire liberty, we ſhould by no means abuſe it. Whoever, therefore, ſtill feels himſelf bound by tyranniſ-

(*m*) 2 Tim. ii. 24.

* συνεχει, *quod de* ligatione *adhibetur apud* LXX. Job xxxvi, 8. οι πεπεδημενοι συχεθησονται εν χοινιοις. (*n*) 2 Cor. v. 14.

ing

ing luſts, and other enſlaving cords of Satan, let him, like her who had been eighteen years bound by Satan, come with his bonds to Chriſt, and like her he will obtain freedom and relief (*o*).

II.

In our bleſſed Saviour's remonſtrance, is to be conſidered,

1. The time when he ſpoke it, 'In that ſame 'hour,' namely, when he was already loaded with bonds and fetters. That he might not appear to undergo them with any repugnancy, after they had bound him, he convinced them of the injuſtice of their proceeding.

2. The intent of his remonſtrance. He was willing to ſhew that he was innocent (ſo that there was no need of binding him ſo haſtily) and that this indignity did not proceed from his enemies malice only, but, the hour being come, God permitted and allowed them ſo to do, after they had long endeavoured it in vain.

3. The perſons to whom he directs his remonſtrance, who were thoſe that came to apprehend him; particularly the Chief Prieſts, *i. e.* ſome of the principal prieſts, and heads of the four and twenty orders into which David had divided the Prieſts; the Captains of the Temple, who had the ſuperintendency of the guard of the Levites in the Temple, and, by order from the Sanhedrim, were to apprehend thoſe whom they directed to be taken into cuſtody; and laſtly, the Elders of the Sanhedrim. So that he does

(*o*) Luke xiii. 11, 21.

not

not ſo much addreſs himſelf to the Roman ſoldiery, as to the Jewiſh rulers, at whoſe ſolicitation the Roman ſoldiers had been ſent on this errand. The latter attended the officers, leſt they ſhould again come back without performing their orders; who being aſked before, Why they had not brought Jeſus? They anſwered, 'Never man ſpake like this man (*p*).'

4. The purport of our Lord's remonſtrance. At firſt he reproves them for coming out againſt him with ſuch a force, as if he were one of thoſe murderers or robbers who ſwarmed at that time in Judea; and ſhews that by ſuch a proceeding, they inſulted him without a cauſe, and treated him as one who intended to oppoſe the civil power, *&c.* as will be ſhewn more at large, in the following Conſideration. Hence we may learn the following truths.

1. The world, though it may bind the hands of the perſecuted witneſſes of truth, cannot always at the ſame time bind their tongues from confeſſing the truth. Chriſt gives up his hands to the cords, but his tongue he keeps free, according to his previous reſolution, 'I have not 'refrained my lips (*q*).' Thus in the hiſtory of the Martyrs, we frequently find that before, and in the midſt of their ſufferings, they exhorted the ſpectators in the moſt pathetic manner; of this their tormentors, eſpecially the Popiſh perſecutors, were ſo apprehenſive, that they often prevented them from ſpeaking, by ſtopping their mouths, or even cutting out their tongues; or

(*p*) John vii. 45, 46. (*q*) Pſalm xl. 9.

cauſed

cauſed drums to beat during the executions, that the people might not hear, and be convinced by, their reaſonings.

2. The men of this world, in their war againſt Chriſt, make no difficulty of laying aſide, for a time, their eaſe and dignity. It was not very creditable for the chief Prieſts, the Captains of the temple, and the Elders, to be ſeen in this affair amongſt a crowd of ſoldiers, and the meaner officers of a court of juſtice; but as long as it is to act againſt Chriſt, they forego their eaſe, their conveniency, and the reſpect due to their characters.

THE PRAYER.

O Thou moſt wiſe, and moſt prudent, who at a proper ſeaſon didſt vindicate thine own innocence, and thy heavenly Father's honour; though at other times, when calumniated and reproached, thou didſt not open thy mouth. By the former inſtance, thou haſt obtained for us the right of confidently aſſerting our own innocence and integrity; and by the latter, thou haſt atoned for our vain excuſes and ill-grounded apologies. Thanks and praiſe be to thee, O bleſſed Jeſus, for this example propoſed for our imitation. Teach us to ſpeak, or to be ſilent, in right ſeaſon, as thy honour, and the real good of our neighbour, may require. Grant this for the ſake of thy love. Amen.

CONSIDERATION VIII.

A continuance of CHRIST'S *remonſtrance mentioned in the preceding Conſideration.*

'I Was daily with you teaching in the 'temple, and ye took me not: But 'this is your hour, and the power of dark-'neſs; and all this was done, that the Scrip-'tures of the Prophets might be fulfilled.'

Theſe words contain the reſt of our Saviour's remonſtrance to his enemies. Here he gives them to underſtand, that this power of binding him was not owing to their own will and pleaſure, but proceeded from a higher hand; for which end he ſhews them,

Firſt, The circumſtances of the time paſt.

Secondly, Thoſe of the preſent hour.

I.

As to the time paſt, our bleſſed Lord tells them,

Firſt, What his former behaviour had been: 'I was daily with you teaching in the temple.' In which we are to conſider,

1. What our Saviour did. 'I was with you 'teaching.' Chriſt, or the Meſſiah, had been promiſed as a great Prophet (*a*), and as a Teacher of Righteouſneſs * (*b*), which ſacred office he had hitherto diſcharged with the greateſt aſſiduity. What doctrines he taught

(*a*) Deut. xviii. 18. (*b*) Joel ii. 23.

* המורה לצדקה is rendered in our tranſlation 'the former 'rain moderately,' but may ſignify 'a Teacher of Righteouſ-'neſs,' as it is inſerted in the margin of the Engliſh Bible. *W.*

we

we may learn from his very enemies, 'Thou 'teacheſt the way of God in truth (*c*);' and how he inculcated his Divine Doctrines, we may gather from St. Matthew, 'He taught them as 'having authority, and not as the Scribes (*d*),' ſays the Evangeliſt.

2. The Place where he taught. This was the Temple; not in the Sanctuary, much leſs in the Holy of Holies: For into the former none but the Prieſts were admitted; and the high Prieſt only entered into the latter, and that but once a year. But as Chriſt was not a Prieſt of the tribe of Levi, he was by the law of Moſes excluded from thoſe places. By the Temple, therefore, here is to be underſtood the court of the congregation; which afforded an opportunity, and likewiſe proper places, to inſtruct the people. In this place was a particular ſynagogue, where, on the Sabbath-days, and great feſtivals, the law was read and expounded by the Prieſts and Levites; and this was the place, where our bleſſed Lord, when he was but twelve years of age, was found amongſt the Doctors. There were alſo ſeveral cloiſters or portico's in this place; particularly that called Solomon's Porch, where the people aſſembled in rainy weather *. To this portico Jeſus often repaired with his diſciples (*e*); for this place was extremely well adapted for preaching the Goſpel at once both to the Jews and Gentiles.

(*c*) Matt. xxii. 16. (*d*) Matt. vii. 29.
* Vide Lightfoot Hor. Heb. in iv. Evang. p. 947.
(*e*) John x. 23. Acts iii. 11. v. 12.

3. The Time when he taught; and this is expreſſed by the word Daily, or every day *. It is plain, that this is to be limited to the time when Chriſt was at Jeruſalem, and eſpecially the days immediately preceding his Paſſion; during which time, St. Luke tells us, that 'he taught 'daily in the Temple (*f*).' Our bleſſed Lord was for employing the ſhort time that remained of his exemplary Life, in fully declaring to the people the meſſage he had received from his Father. This circumſtance, the bleſſed Jeſus repreſents to his enemies as a convincing proof that he is no aſſaſſin, or mover of ſeditions; for ſuch perſons generally ſhun all public places, and conceal themſelves in woods, caves, and unfrequented places. He further ſhews them that their proceeding was wrong; ſince, if he had taught any erroneous tenets, or any pernicious doctrine, they might have taken him in the fact in the Temple, and have brought him to a legal trial, without having recourſe to military power, and coming upon him in the night. But our bleſſed Saviour adds,

Secondly, What had before paſſed on their ſide, 'You laid no hold on me, ye took me 'not.' Chriſt does not ſay this by way of boaſting; for it was not the want of will, but of the power to take him, that had prevented the deſigns of his enemies. Our bleſſed Lord was in ſuch favour and eſteem with the people, on account of his doctrines and ſurprizing miracles, that they were afraid leſt the people ſhould ſtone

* Καθ' ἡμεραν. (*f*) Chap. xix. 47.

them

them (*g*). This was the check that curbed their fury, or elſe they would have laid hands on our bleſſed Lord much ſooner; and notwithſtanding this reſtraint, they could not forbear ſending their diſciples and officers to apprehend him (*h*), though they returned without effecting their deſign, becauſe his hour was not yet come. This, therefore, might have convinced them that, powerful as they were, they could not effect what they pleaſed; but could do nothing unleſs power were given them from above. This leads us to the following conſiderations.

1. The profanation of edifices conſecrated to Divine worſhip, ſhould not withhold us from frequenting them. The Temple was at that time profaned in the moſt abominable manner, ſo that Chriſt himſelf calls it 'a den of 'thieves (*i*): Nevertheleſs, our bleſſed Lord is daily preſent in the Temple, and there performs his prophetic office. The churches in which our public ſervice is performed, as they are appointed for teaching, and performing the worſhip of God, bear ſome reſemblance to the Temple of Jeruſalem; and indeed there is but too great a reſemblance betwixt them, with regard to profane actions. When the church is made, as it were, the theatre for ſome of the congregation to exhibit all their finery, and feaſt their wanton eyes with ogling and gazing about; while others are whiſpering, or uſing indecent geſtures, and others ſleeping, *&c.* it cannot be denied, but that they are ſhamefully profaned.

(*g*) Luke xx. 6. (*h*) John vii. 25. (*i*) Luke xix. 46.

Such a ſight may induce ſome more auſtere than religious to abſent themſelves from places of worſhip, out of a pretence that they were more offended than edified there; but the great example of our bleſſed Saviour ſhould move ſuch perſons not to forbear coming to hear the Word of God, and to pay their adoration in his Sanctuary; by which means, they will not only be edified themſelves, but ſet a good example to others.

2. True Chriſtians do not ſhun the light; but rather endeavour to walk ſo openly, that their words and works may be manifeſt to every one. Chriſt, indeed, had taught before in the wilderneſs, on a mountain, and on board a ſhip; but his teaching was always public; nor did he exclude any one who was willing to hear him. But on the days preceding his Paſſion, when his enemies were plotting his death, and forming their bloody deſign, ſo far was our bleſſed Lord from ſhunning the light, that he taught publicly in the Temple, where every one might hear and examine his doctrine, to which he likewiſe appeals (*k*). Nay, he had long before invalidated the cenſure of clandeſtine aſſemblies, by the mouth of the Prophet, 'I have not 'ſpoken in ſecret, in a dark place of the 'earth (*l*).' Our Lord and Maſter had no need of concealing himſelf in corners, and carrying on his deſigns clandeſtinely; neither ſhould Chriſtians deviate from his great Example. How glorious an apology is it, when one can ſay with

(*k*) John xviii. 20. (*l*) Iſaiah xlv. 19.

St.

St. Paul, 'I have lived in all good conſcience 'before God to this day (*m*)!' How honourable is it to be able, with godly ſimplicity, to carry on our affairs openly, and in the eyes of the whole world, without having recourſe to clandeſtine doings. The children of darkneſs can by no means bear the public eye; for 'he who doeth evil hateth 'the light.' Thoſe only ſkulk, and hide their actions, who walk in wicked ways; 'for it is a 'ſhame to ſpeak of thoſe things, that are done 'by them in ſecret.' It is certain, that if the works of many wicked perſons were to be publicly known, they would appear ſo extremely ſhocking, that every one would point at them. Where is the worlding to be found, who is always ready to declare his ſecret thoughts and intentions? What ſinful, atheiſtical, wanton, and impious thoughts would then come to light? But the children of God walk in light, and need not fear that their actions, or even their words and thoughts, ſhould be made known to any one; for 'they are wrought in God (*n*).'

3. Wicked men will be charged with ſuch ſins, as they would willingly have committed, but could not for want of opportunity. God, indeed, does not always prevent the commiſſion of ſins by external or natural means, (for he deals with men as rational creatures) though he ſometimes interferes, when other circumſtances require it. Hence it often comes to paſs, that a wicked man forms a reſolution of committing a ſin, and before-hand pleaſes himſelf

(*m*) Acts xxiii. 1. (*n*) John iii. 21.

with the thoughts of it; but afterwards, for want of an opportunity, he is obliged, though much againſt his will, to drop, or at leaſt poſtpone it to a convenient time. But ſin, when once fixedly determined in the human heart, is already committed in the ſight of God. For both in good and evil deſigns, the great Searcher of hearts looks on the will as the deed, though it be never put in execution. This was the caſe with the enemies of Chriſt. They had not laid hands on him in the Temple; but this was becauſe it had not been in their power: their hands, to their extreme mortification, were tied up by the fear of the people. When it ſenſibly touches the heart of a ſinner, that he cannot perpetrate the wicked fact he intended, it is a certain ſign that God will impute to him that ſin, as if it had been committed. True virtue does not conſiſt in merely abſtaining from evil, but in a voluntary averſion to it. A truly noble diſpoſition of mind ſhews itſelf in willingly and freely, for the honour of Chriſt, abſtaining and ſhunning every evil, with every opportunity, convenience, and ability of committing it.

II.

Chriſt lays before his enemies the circumſtance of the preſent juncture, which is to be conſidered,

Firſt, Abſolutely and in itſelf. 'This is 'your hour, *&c.*' By the hour, is to be underſtood the time appointed for our Saviour's ſufferings by his heavenly Father (*o*). This cri-

(*o*) John xii. 27.

tical

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tical time, which for its ſhortneſs is called the hour. Chriſt in another place terms 'HIS 'hour (*p*). But here he ſays to his enemies, 'This is YOUR hour,' *i. e.* the time which you have long wiſhed for, and which is allowed you for putting your horrid purpoſes in execution; the time which you moſt impiouſly abuſe for the perpetration of your blood-thirſty deſigns, in which you ſet aſide God, and the fear of him, from before your eyes. In your opinion this is a fortunate hour, in which the wicked ſcheme you have been ſo long contriving is brought to bear, according to your deſire. But it was in reality a very unfortunate hour for them. For it is added, 'and the power of darkneſs,' *i. e.* the time when God has permitted the prince of darkneſs to prompt you to this unparalleled wickedneſs. But our bleſſed Saviour likewiſe ſhews how the preſent hour is to be conſidered

Secondly, With reſpect to the Divine decree. 'And all this was done, that the Scriptures of 'the Prophets might be fulfilled;' namely, thoſe paſſages in which it is foretold, that the Meſſiah ſhould be ſurrounded, as it were, by ravenous dogs and roaring lions; ſhould be apprehended and ill-treated (*q*)†. But it muſt not from hence be concluded, that the Jews were under a neceſſity of ſinning, that the Scripture

(*p*) John vii. 30. and viii. 20. (*q*) Pſ. xxii.

† *Cujus* Pſalmi *inſcriptionem huc refert* SALOMO VAN TILL Comment. in Pſalm. & *vertit* על אילת השחר de poteſtate tenebrarum; *quod tamen ulteriori ſcrutinio dignum, quum alii vertant*, de cerva auroræ.

might

might be fulfilled. This inference would be incompatible with the juſtice and holineſs of God, whoſe preſcience foreſaw the wickedneſs of the Jews, and inſerted in the Scriptures their method of conducting their impious deſigns. If the Jews had acted otherwiſe, the event would have been alſo otherwiſe predicted. But their behaviour on this occaſion was a confirmation, that God cauſed the Prophets to foretel only ſuch things as were ſtrictly true concerning this event. Hence we deduce the following truths.

1. He, who looks upon the hours as his own, will be ſeduced to many ſins by ſuch an error. This our Lord hints at by the words, 'this is 'your hour:' As if he had ſaid, this is the time which you have laid hold on to perpetrate your impious deſigns. Time is not our own property, but belongs to God. For every hour, every moment of time, we are to give account to him; for as we are but ſtewards of all his other gifts, ſo likewiſe are we of this; which is of infinite value, as our eternal welfare depends upon the right uſe of it. With what care and caution therefore ſhould we improve our time, that not one fleeting hour may ſlip away, in which we do not ſow ſome good ſeed towards a harveſt in a bleſſed Eternity.

2. When men imagine themſelves to be in a ſituation of doing their will with the greateſt freedom, they are then the greateſt ſlaves of Satan. The Jews, in the inſtance before us, ſeem to have their hands at full liberty, ſtretching them out without any controul, to lay hold of, and bind

bind our bleſſed Lord; but he ſhews them that they are under the power of the prince of darkneſs, whom the Almighty permits to rule and drive them according to his own Will. 'Whoſoever committeth ſin is the ſervant of ſin; but he whom the Son has made free, is free indeed (*r*).'

3. The Scripture is a book, in which the actions and cataſtrophe of the wicked are ſet forth by an omniſcient Spirit. This is done, indeed, in common and uſual phraſes; but in the Scriptures every one may behold his own image, and at the ſame time learn, what will be his end, if he continues in his wicked ways. 'There is no peace, ſaith my God, for the wicked; ye are ſtill the ſame, and do not fear God; the wicked go on from evil to worſe, they ſink down, and their end is terrible; he who believeth not is condemned, *&c.*' How deplorable a Conſideration is it, that the Scripture is thus fulfilled in ſo many! that the curſe and puniſhment denounced by God againſt his enemies, ſhould fall on ſuch multitudes. On the other hand, how joyful is it to experience the accompliſhment of thoſe precious promiſes, which God has graciouſly made to his friends and ſervants.

THE PRAYER.

O Faithful and moſt loving Saviour, who didſt permit the afflictive and dark hour to come upon thee, in which Satan had power over thine

(*r*) John viii. 34, 36.

enemies,

enemies, to ſtretch out their hands to bind thee; by which thou haſt acquired for us freedom from the power of darkneſs, ſo that it ſhall neither condemn us before the tribunal of God, nor triumph over our ſouls. Thanks be to thee for this unſpeakable grace! Grant that we may live as true ſubjects to thee in thy kingdom of light and peace, that we may evermore ſerve thee in holineſs and righteouſneſs of life, for the ſake of thy meritorious ſubmiſſion. Amen.

CONSIDERATION IX.

CHRIST *deſerted by his diſciples.*

'(a) THEN all the diſciples forſook him 'and fled. And there followed him 'a certain young man, having a linen cloth 'caſt about his naked body; and the young 'men laid hold on him: and he left the linen 'cloth, and fled from them naked.'

Here is related how the diſciples deſerted their Lord and Maſter. Theſe words exhibit to us

Firſt, The flight of his Apoſtles.

Secondly, That of another young man, who was his diſciple.

I.

In this account of the flight of the Apoſtles is mentioned

1. The time: 'Then,' i. e. when the bleſſed Jeſus was not only bound, but led away by the multitude. Hitherto the diſciples had imagined,

(a) Matt. xxvi. 56. Mark xiv. 51, 52.

that the Lord would diſengage himſelf from the hands of his enemies; that, like Samſon, he would break their cords, or paſs through the midſt of the multitude unobſerved; and while they entertained theſe flattering hopes, they were alſo ready to make good their promiſe, and riſk all for his ſake: But ſeeing that their Maſter yielded himſelf to his enemies; that he was bound and hurried along like a common helpleſs man; their courage failed them, and all their thoughts turned on their own ſafety.

2. The perſons who fled. Theſe were all the diſciples, and conſequently the intrepid Peter himſelf, who had made ſuch mighty proteſtations that he was ready to die with Jeſus; John, who was otherwiſe faithful to his Maſter, the diſciple whom Jeſus loved, and who, but a few hours before, at the eating of the paſchal Lamb, had leaned on his ſacred boſom; and James, who, together with John his brother, had offered to drink the cup which Jeſus was to drink of, and be baptized with his baptiſm (*b*); in ſhort all his diſciples to a man.

3. The manner of their flight. 'They forſook him and fled.' If we recollect that Chriſt had foretold this flight, ſaying, 'All ye ſhall be offended becauſe of me (*c*), it will appear, that this flight was accompanied with an offence taken at their Lord and Maſter. "Alas!" ſaid they amongſt themſelves "what "poor miſtaken men are we? we looked on "Jeſus of Nazareth as the Son of God, and

(*b*) Matt. xx. 22. (*b*) Matt. xxvi. 31.

"the

" the promiſed Meſſiah, who was to redeem " Iſrael from ſlavery; but in all appearance, " our expectations were ill grounded, and now " our former hope will be fruſtrated. If he " were the Son of God, it is not to be ſup- " poſed that his heavenly Father would let his " enemies thus triumph over him." Thus were they offended at the ſufferings of Chriſt, and did not think that the diſcharge which our bleſſed Lord had given them by ſaying, ' let ' theſe go,' would ſuffice for their ſafety; but they alſo haſtened to ſave themſelvês, and every one made the beſt of his way to his home. In this were fulfilled the prophecies concerning this flight, and the Meſſiah's being deſerted by his friends (*d*). Hence we may learn the following truths.

1. Men little think how weak they are, until God permits them to fall into ſuch circumſtances, as to give ſcandalous proofs of their weakneſs and irreſolution. How often had our bleſſed Lord declared to his diſciples the weakneſs of their nature, and they would not believe it? Peter contradicted his Maſter time after time, and thought, that though he could not be anſwerable for his brethren, yet he could vouch for himſelf that he would bear his Maſter company to priſon and to death; and with this ſanguine preſumption he alſo inflamed the reſt of the diſciples, ſo that they all made the like proteſtation. But what they would not believe,

(*d*) Zach. xiii. 7. Pſalm lxix. 8. John xvi. 32. Mark xiv. 27.

they

they were to experience to their ſorrow. Thus alſo is it with many Chriſtians, whoſe natural ſelf-love is a flattering mirrour, which exhibits a much more beautiful appearance than they in reality have. We entertain ſuch an high opinion of our own hearts, that we think them proof againſt every attack. The ſecret deluſion that lurks in the heart, we are not willing to hear of. Thus, there is no end of palliatives; and every one of us induſtriouſly gathers fig-leaves to cover his own nakedneſs. We confidently venture ourſelves in ſo many conjunctures, which may be an occaſion of falling; and yet, at other times, we are ready to plead the frailty of human nature, when we are exhorted to greater earneſtneſs in religion. The meaſures that God takes for bringing ſuch perſons to a knowledge of themſelves, and their inability, is, to permit them to fall into ſuch circumſtances, as will lay open the inmoſt receſſes of their hearts; and, for their amendment, to ſuffer them to commit ſuch faults, as muſt evidently ſhew them, that their hearts are not ſo ſound as they imagine. Happy is he, who abaſes himſelf in the ſpirit of real humility, ſo that God has no occaſion to humble him.

2. The diſciples, in their flight, are an inſtance of the changeable fickleneſs of our hearts. Now they are elate, and the next moment ſpiritleſs and deſponding. Before the approach of danger, the diſciples were raſh and daring; but in time of danger, faint-hearted and irreſolute. This is a true repreſentation of the human heart.

In

In time of perſecution, it is eaſily ſeen who are the true followers of Chriſt. Though the diſciples had an aſſurance from Chriſt himſelf, that their enemies ſhould not hurt them, yet they baſely fly. But we have not only one, but a hundred great and precious promiſes, that God will be with us in diſtreſs; and have before us numberleſs examples, that he whoſe hope is in God ſhall never be confounded; yet in time of danger, how timorous and fluctuating are our hearts? On the firſt appearance of any calamity, like Jacob, we prepare for flight. It becomes us with ſorrow to own, that we have but little confidence in God, and that by our mean diſtruſt, we have no reliance on his promiſes, which, notwithſtanding, are all 'yea, and 'Amen.'

3. Chriſt, by being thus forſaken by his beſt and moſt intimate friends, has, upon our ſincere repentance, atoned for the infidelity we have been guilty of towards God and man. We have forſaken God, the inexhauſtible ſource of life and happineſs, our beſt friend, and greateſt Benefactor, and therefore have deſerved to be eternally forſaken by him. But the bleſſed Jeſus intervened as the expiation of our infidelity, and, by this deſertion which he ſuffered, has atoned for all the breaches of truſt we have been guilty of towards God and our neighbour. How often is it ſeen, that in time of perſecution, even the Miniſters of God are poſſeſſed with ſuch timidity and weakneſs, and have ſo little reliance on God's Providence, that they baſely fly, and forſake

ſake their flock. But this deſertion they afterwards frequently lament with floods of tears; and under the reproaches of conſcience, have experienced the enlivening comforts ariſing from the merits of Chriſt, who was forſaken by his own diſciples.

4. When we are abandoned by all men in our diſtreſs, the remembrance of our bleſſed Lord's being forſaken ſhould powerfully ſupport our drooping ſpirits. The nearer the bleſſed Jeſus drew to his tragical exit, the ſmaller was the number of the diſciples who attended him. When he ate the Paſchal Lamb with his diſciples, they were all preſent. When he went to the Garden of Gethſemanè, one had already ſtayed behind, namely, Judas. When he was come to the Garden, he took only three of them to go farther in with him, and left the other eight near the entrance of the Garden. When he was bound and apprehended, he found himſelf quite alone, as a ſhepherd deſerted by his ſheep. When he was interrogated in the high Prieſt's palace, Peter again made his appearance; but returned to his home, loaded with more diſgrace than he had brought out with him. John was the only diſciple who appeared under the croſs of Chriſt, during his bitter Paſſion. This deſertion aggravated the ſufferings of our bleſſed Lord, but at the ſame time imparted an heroic dignity to his Paſſion; for by this means, the honour of the victory obtained over death belongs to Him only; not one of his diſciples being at hand to aſſiſt or ſupport him.

However, though he was deſerted by all, he was not alone; for his Father was with him (*e*). Our bleſſed Saviour now experienced, how it is with perſons who are deſerted and forſaken by their deareſt friends; and therefore, he will never neglect or forſake us: And if from extremity of trouble, and ſeverity of perſecutions, we unhappily forſake him; yet is he faithful, and, upon our repentance, will be our unerring guide, through the dreary valley of the ſhadow of death (*f*), when we ſhall find ourſelves alone, and deſerted by all our beſt, ſincereſt friends.

II.

But St. Mark farther mentions the flight of a certain young man.

1. The perſon who fled was a young man. This affrighted youth is expreſsly diſtinguiſhed from the diſciples of our Lord, and therefore it is not probable, that he was one of the Twelve*; for the diſciples had left their Maſter and, whereas, this young man, for ſometime after, followed our bleſſed Lord. He was probably † a young man, who lived in ſome village near Gethſemanè, through which the bleſſed Jeſus was hurried away; and being awakened out of ſleep by the noiſe of the multitude, he was inclined to ſee what was the cauſe of ſuch a tumult.

(*e*) John xvi. 32. (*f*) Pſ. xxiii. 4.

* *Secus ac* EPIPHANIUS *putat*, Hæreſ. LXXVIII. *qui pro* Jacobo minore *habet; ac* BARONIUS, *ad annum Chriſti* XXXIV. *n.* 86. *qui eum* Johannem *evangeliſtam fuiſſe, cum* AMBROSIO, GREGORIO *et aliis, putat,*

† *Quod etiam* HUGO GROTIUS *ad Marc.* XIV. 51, *ſtatuit.*

2. The

2. The apparel of the young man who fled is deſcribed. He had a linen cloth, or a robe of fine linen, caſt about his naked body. This perſon appears to have riſen from his bed, being awakened by the blaze of the torches and the buſtle of the croud, and in a hurry throws about him a kind of looſe garment to go and ſee what was doing. When he underſtood, that it was Jeſus of Nazareth that had been taken, he followed ſome paces to ſee whither the multitude would carry him.

3. The occaſion alſo of his flight is indicated in theſe words, 'The young men laid hold on 'him;' by the young men are here underſtood, either the Roman ſoldiers (who were ſo called among that nation †,) or ſome other young men or ſervants, that were among the croud. Theſe perſons ſuſpected the young man to be one of our Saviour's diſciples, and poſſibly apprehended that he might raiſe a diſturbance in the ſtreets of Jeruſalem, and ſtir up the people to reſcue Jeſus out of the hands of his enemies. On this account, they thought it adviſable to lay hold on him, in order to prevent any further miſchief.

4. The manner of this young man's flight. He was frightened at being ſeized, ſo that he left the linen cloth by which they held him, and ran away from them naked; and then, after this narrow eſcape, he returned to his bed, from which his curioſity had led him. The deſign of this

† *Sic apud Romanos, milites vocabantur* Juvenes, vide JUSTI LIPSII Elect. lib. 2. c. 1.

narrative is to ſhew, how inveterate the enemies of our Lord were, not ſparing any one of whom they had the leaſt ſuſpicion that he was a diſciple of Chriſt; and likewiſe as a proof, that it was not to be imputed to the lenity of the ſoldiers, but to Chriſt's command, *viz.* 'Let 'theſe go their way', that they did not alſo ſeize the diſciples, or purſue them when they fled. Hence we may learn,

That two perſons may often commit the ſame fault; and yet one may be much more criminal than the other. The external action here was the ſame: The diſciples fled; the young man did the like. Nevertheleſs, the flight of the former was far more culpable than that of the latter. For, *firſt*, as the Apoſtles had received ſo many benefits from Chriſt, there was a greater obligation on them to live and die with him. *Secondly*, They had before very ſolemnly and earneſtly proteſted, that they would not forſake their Lord and Maſter; which we do not find that this young man had done. *Thirdly*, They had before been warned of their deſertion in the Garden; whereas the young man came into this danger quite unprepared. *Fourthly*, Chriſt had given them a protection by his ſpeech to the multitude; but the young man had none. *Laſtly*, The ſoldiers laid hold of this youth before he ran away; but the diſciples fled of their own accord.

THE

THE PRAYER.

O Faithful and loving Saviour, praiſed be thy name for all thine external ſufferings, which, in and near the Garden of Gethſemanè, thou wert pleaſed to endure for our ſake. Let us not forget at what an ineſtimable price our redemption was procured, that we may ſet the higher value on our immortal ſouls. May every painful circumſtance of thy ſufferings be deeply impreſſed on our minds; and may thy Holy Spirit enlighten, ſupport, and ſtrengthen us, that we may courageouſly follow thee in all ſufferings, and not be aſhamed of the diſtinguiſhing badge of thy holy Religion. To thee, the victorious Captain of our ſalvation, who art perfected and glorified by ſufferings, be aſcribed unfeigned thanks and endleſs praiſe, for ever and ever. Amen.

CONSIDERATIONS

ON THE

SUFFERINGS

OF

CHRIST

Before the Spiritual Court of the Jews.

The accounts given by the four Evangeliſts (*a*), connected and harmoniſed.

'AND they that had laid hold on Jeſus 'led him away to Annas firſt, for he 'was father-in-law to Caiaphas who was the 'High Prieſt that ſame year. Now Caiaphas 'was he, who gave counſel to the Jews, that 'it was expedient that one man ſhould die for 'the people. And they led Jeſus away to Cai-'aphas the High Prieſt, where the Scribes and 'Elders were aſſembled.

(*a*) Matt. xxvi. 57—75. Mark xiv. 53—72. Luke xxii. 54—71, John xviii. 13—27.

Simon

'Simon Peter followed Jeſus afar off, ſo did
'another diſciple, to the palace of the High
'Prieſt. That diſciple was known unto the
'High Prieſt, and went in with Jeſus into the
'palace of the High Prieſt. But Peter ſtood
'at the door without. Then went out that
'other diſciple who was known to the High
'Prieſt, and ſpake unto her that kept the door,
'and brought in Peter. And the ſervants and
'officers ſtood there, who had made a fire of
'coals, for it was cold; and they warmed
'themſelves: And Peter went in, and ſat down
'among the ſervants, and warmed himſelf at
'the fire, that he might ſee the end. Then
'the damſel that kept the High Prieſt's door
'beheld Peter, as he ſat by the fire, and ear-
'neſtly looked upon him, and ſaid, Thou alſo
'waſt with Jeſus of Nazareth the Galilean.
'Art thou not one of this man's diſciples? But
'he denied it before them all, ſaying, Woman,
'I am not, I know him not; neither underſtand
'I what thou ſayeſt. And he went out into
'the porch; and the cock crew.

'The High Prieſt then aſked Jeſus of his
'diſciples, and of his doctrine. Jeſus an-
'ſwered him, I ſpake openly to the world; I
'ever taught in the ſynagogue, and in the
'temple, whither the Jews always reſort; and
'in ſecret have I ſaid nothing. Why aſkeſt
'thou me? Aſk them who heard me, what I
'have ſaid unto them: Behold they know what
'I have ſaid.

'And when Jeſus had thus ſpoken, one of 'the officers, who ſtood by, ſtruck Jeſus with 'the palm of the hand, ſaying, Anſwereſt thou 'the High Prieſt ſo? Jeſus anſwered him, If 'I have ſpoken evil, bear witneſs of the evil: 'but if well, why ſmiteſt thou me? (Now An-'nas had ſent him bound to Caiaphas the High 'Prieſt.)

'And a little while after, as Peter was gone 'out to the porch, another maid ſaw him, and 'ſaid unto them that were there, This fellow 'was alſo with Jeſus of Nazareth. Then one 'ſaid unto him, Art thou not one of his diſci-'ples? But Peter again denied with an oath, 'Man, I am not; I know not the man. And 'after a while, about the ſpace of one hour, 'another confidently affirmed, ſaying, Of a 'truth this fellow alſo was with him; for he 'is a Galilean. Then they that ſtood by came 'up, and ſaid to Peter, Surely, thou alſo art 'one of them; for thou art a Galilean, and 'thy ſpeech agreeth thereto, and bewrayeth thee. 'One of the ſervants of the High Prieſt (being 'his kinſman whoſe ear Peter had cut off,) ſaith, 'Did not I ſee thee in the garden with him? But 'Peter began to curſe and to ſwear, and again 'denied it, and ſaid, Man, I know not what 'thou ſayeſt: I know not this man of whom 'thou ſpeakeſt.

'And immediately, while Peter yet ſpake, 'the cock crew a ſecond time. And the Lord 'turned, and looked on Peter: and Peter re-'membered the word of the Lord, how he had

'ſaid

'ſaid unto him, Before the cock crow twice,
'thou ſhalt deny me thrice.

'Now the chief Prieſts and Elders, and all
'the council, ſought falſe witneſs againſt Jeſus,
'to put him to death; but found none. Yea,
'though many bear falſe witneſs againſt him,
'their teſtimony agreed not together. At the
'laſt came two falſe witneſſes and bare falſe
'teſtimony againſt him, ſaying, We heard him
'ſay, I am able to [I will] deſtroy this temple
'of God that is made with hands, and within
'three days I will build another made without
'hands. But neither ſo did their witneſs
'agree together. Then the High Prieſt ſtood
'up in the midſt, and aſked Jeſus, ſaying, An-
'ſwereſt thou nothing? what is it that theſe
'witneſs againſt thee? But Jeſus held his peace,
'and anſwered nothing.

'Again the High Prieſt aſked Jeſus, Art
'thou the Chriſt, the Son of the Bleſſed?
'I adjure thee by the living God, that thou tell
'us, whether thou be the Chriſt, the Son of
'God: Jeſus ſaith unto him, Thou haſt ſaid; I
'am. Nevertheleſs I ſay unto you, Hereafter
'ye ſhall ſee the Son of Man ſiting on the
'right hand of Power, and coming in the clouds
'of heaven.

'Then the High Prieſt rent his clothes,
'ſaying, He has ſpoken blaſphemy, what far-
'ther need have we of witneſſes? Behold, now
'ye have heard his blaſphemy. What think
'ye? They all condemned him, and anſwered
'and ſaid, He is guilty of death.

'Then

'Then ſome began to ſpit on him, and they 'did ſpit in his face. And the ſervants, and 'the men who held Jeſus, mocked him, ſmote 'him, and buffeted him. And they blind-'folded him, and ſtruck him on the face; and 'aſked him, ſaying, Propheſy unto us, thou 'Chriſt, who is it that ſmote thee? And many 'other things blaſphemouſly ſpake they againſt 'him.

'And ſtraitway in the morning, as ſoon as it 'was day, the chief Prieſts, the Elders of the 'people, and the Scribes, came together, and 'led him into their council. And they ſaid, 'Art thou the Chriſt? tell us. And he ſaid 'unto them, If I tell you, ye will not believe; 'and if I aſk you, ye will not anſwer me, nor 'let me go. Hereafter ſhall the ſon of Man 'ſit on the right hand of the power of God. 'Then ſaid they all, Art thou then the Son of 'God? and he ſaid unto them, Ye ſay that I 'am. And they ſaid, What need we any 'farther witneſs? for we ourſelves have heard 'of his own mouth.

The PREPARATORY PRAYER.

O Faithful Saviour, whoſe merits are infinite! as we are now going to conſider another part of the hiſtory of thy ſufferings, we humbly pray thee to grant us the aſſiſtance of thy good Spirit; not only to enlighten our underſtanding, but alſo powerfully to incline our wills, that we may, from the heart,

be

be obedient to all thoſe precious truths which we ſhall learn from this hiſtory. Impart a particular bleſſing to each Conſideration, to the praiſe of thine infinite love, which moved thee to ſuffer the moſt painful and ignominious death for our ſake. Amen.

CONSIDERATION I.

The LORD JESUS *brought before the ſpiritual court of the Jews.*

'(*a*) AND they that had laid hold on Jeſus 'led him away to Annas firſt, for 'he was father-in-law to Caiaphas who was 'High Prieſt that ſame year. Now Caiaphas 'was he, who gave counſel to the Jews, that it 'was expedient that one man ſhould die for 'the people. And they led Jeſus away to Caia-'phas the High Prieſt, where the Scribes and 'Elders were aſſembled.'

In theſe words we have an account of the bringing of our bleſſed Lord before the ſpiritual court of the Jews. We find that he was brought,

Firſt, Before Annas, one of the chief Prieſts.
Secondly, Before Caiaphas the High Prieſt.

I.

That Chriſt was firſt brought before Annas we are informed by theſe words, 'And they 'that had laid hold on Jeſus led him to An-

(*a*) Matt. xxvi. 57. Mark xiv. 53. Luke xxii. 54. John xviii. 13, 14.

'nas,

'nas, *&c.*' Here are mentioned, *firſt*, the perſons who led or brought our bleſſed Saviour; and, *ſecondly*, the perſon before whom he is brought.

Firſt, The perſons who brought him thither are not expreſly ſpecified in the words which we have recited above; but they are only mentioned in theſe general terms, 'they that had laid hold 'on Jeſus.' If we would particularly learn who they were, we ſhall find them recounted as follows by St. John: 'Then the Band, and the 'Captain, and officers of the Jews, took Jeſus, 'and bound him, and led him away to Annas 'firſt (*b*).' Hence we ſee that they were Jews and Gentiles, who, actuated by the ſpirit of murder, had given themſelves up as wretched inſtruments to deliver up the Lamb of God to the bloody Tribunal of the Sanhedrim at Jeruſalem. The party of Roman ſoldiers, which, at the time of the high Feſtivals, were to prevent any tumult or inſurrection at Jeruſalem, and likewiſe their Captain or Commander, were Heathens. The officers of the Jews, *i. e.* the officers of the Sanhedrim, and other domeſticks of the chief Prieſts and Elders, were Iſraelites by birth. Both Jews and Gentiles had laid hands on Chriſt, the Anointed of the Lord, and treated him with inhuman barbarity in the Garden; and both were likewiſe eagerly engaged in hurrying him to the place, where the unjuſt ſentence of death was to be paſſed on him.

But theſe miſcreants not only 'laid hold on

(*b*) John xviii. 12, 13.

'our

'our bleſſed Lord; but alſo led him away.' The former action is thus deſcribed by St. Matthew, 'They that had laid faſt hold on Jeſus,' as the original denotes*: For the traitor Judas, had given them theſe inſtructions, 'Whomſoever I ſhall 'kiſs, the ſame is he, take him, [or hold him 'faſt†,] and carry him away ſafely (*c*). All that Judas had promiſed to do, in return for the thirty pieces of ſilver, was to deliver Jeſus into their hands; as for any farther proceedings, he left all to them. Now, if it ſhould happen, that Jeſus ſhould eſcape by the way, as he had before, more than once, paſſed through the midſt of his enemies unmoleſted, or that ſome of his adherents ſhould reſcue him out of their hands; Judas was by no means to be anſwerable in either caſe, nor to return any part of the money. On this account, the Pagan ſoldiers and Jewiſh officers uſed all poſſible precaution, and held faſt the Lord Jeſus, that he might not again, as it were, ſlip out of their hands.

The other action attributed to theſe perſons, is leading him away, 'They that had laid hold 'on Jeſus, led him away.' Our bleſſed Lord, after eating the paſchal lamb with his diſciples at Jeruſalem, went out of the city, over the brook Kedron, and paſſing through the valley of Jehoſaphat, came to the Mount of Olives; where, after an agonizing conflict with everlaſting death, he was delivered into the hands of his enemies by the treachery of his diſciple Judas. But now, he was again led from Gethſe-

* κρατησαντες τον Ιησουν. † κρατησατε αὐτον, &c. (*c*) Mark xiv. 44.

manè

manè into the city. Some are of opinion, that the multitude, inſtead of going the direct way with him, took a circuit by the Sheep-gate. Through this gate, the ſheep which were deſigned for ſacrifices, and kept in the adjacent paſtures were brought into the city, in order to be ſacrificed in the Temple, which ſtood oppoſite to this gate. By this ſame way, the true Lamb of God, which was to be offered up for the ſins of the whole world, was alſo led into the city, and brought before the Prieſts, whoſe province it was to determine whether the beaſts that were brought thither, were fit to be ſacrificed or not. The multitude, no doubt, had quite another view in dragging him into the city, bound as a thief and murderer, by that very gate through which he had, but a few days before, made his public entry amidſt the joyful acclamations of the people. By this circumſtance, they intended a greater inſult on our bleſſed Saviour, *viz.* that the honours, which the well-meaning populace had deſigned him, might be turned into ignominy and diſgrace.

Secondly, The perſons, before whom our bleſſed Lord was brought, are deſcribed both by their names, their relation, and office.

The name of one of the perſons is Annas. 'They led him away to Annas firſt.' Mention alſo is made of this name in St. Luke (*d*), and the Acts of the Apoſtles (*e*), in both which places this impious man is ſtiled High Prieſt; for he had once been inveſted with that office, but

(*d*) Chap. iii. 2. (*e*) Chap. iv. 6.

after-

afterwards, according to the cuſtom of thoſe times, depoſed. This Annas, whom the Jewiſh hiſtorian Joſephus calls Ananus*, was a perſon of great importance at Jeruſalem; for he had not only been High Prieſt himſelf for ſeveral years, but had five ſons who were all ſucceſſively likewiſe advanced to that high dignity; to which alſo he now ſaw even his ſon-in-law, Caiaphas, promoted. This was a very ſingular good fortune, to which few of his cotemporaries could lay claim.

But the particular circumſtance by which he is here deſcribed is, that he was father-in-law to Caiaphas, who had married his daughter. This, indeed, ſeems to have been the real motive for bringing the Lord Jeſus firſt to Annas's houſe. Though poſſibly, it ſtood in a ſtreet, through which our bleſſed Lord was to be carried in his way to Caiaphas's Palace, yet, they would hardly have gone firſt into Annas's houſe, had he not been father-in-law to the High Prieſt for that year; and as he was more advanced in years, and more crafty and full of ſtratagem, he had probably inſtructed his ſon-in-law in forming the moſt cruel devices againſt Jeſus, and prompted him to put them in execution. Now, theſe plots having, in their opinion, ſo fortunately ſucceeded; they were for paying a compliment to this reverend conſpirator, by carrying before him firſt the blameleſs Lamb which was led to the ſlaughter, that he might feaſt his eyes with the ſight, and enjoy the malicious

* Jewiſh Antiquities, Book xx. chap. 8.

pleaſure, which the apprehending of the bleſſed Jeſus gave to the Jewiſh Prieſts.

What paſſed in Annas's houſe, with regard to our bleſſed Lord, the Evangeliſts do not ſpecify. Some, indeed, are of opinion, that he was here interrogated, and denied by Peter for the firſt time, and ſtruck on the face by an officer; becauſe St. John, after relating theſe three particulars, concludes this part of the narrative with theſe words, 'And Annas ſent him bound 'to the High Prieſt, Caiaphas (*f*).' But it was not in Annas's houſe where theſe things happened; for theſe words ought to be included in a parentheſis *. Hence it appears, that the Lord Jeſus was queſtioned concerning his doctrine in Caiaphas's houſe, and was there ſtruck by a brutal officer; an inſolence contrary to all the dictates of juſtice and humanity, as the bleſſed Jeſus then ſtood bound before the Tribunal; for Annas had ſent him bound to his ſon-in-law, Caiaphas. However, though Chriſt underwent no examination, with regard to his doctrine, *&c.* in Annas's houſe; yet we may reaſonably ſuppoſe, that the domeſtics and the multitude, who brought him bound thither, were not wanting in offering inſults to his ſacred Perſon: And we may further conclude, that the Lord Jeſus was reproached in the moſt virulent manner, by this haughty and imperious pontif.

Thus was our bleſſed Lord brought firſt be-

(*f*) Chap. xviii.

* The Engliſh tranſlators render this verſe, very properly, 'Now Annas had ſent him bound to Caiaphas, the high Prieſt.' *W.*

fore

fore Annas, the high Prieſt: From this circumſtance, before we proceed further, we ſhall draw the following inferences.

1. The children of darkneſs, in many things, ſhew themſelves wiſer than the children of light. How careful were the ſoldiers and officers of the Jews to hold faſt the Lord Jeſus, and ſafely lead him away, after he had fallen into their hands? How willing likewiſe was the depoſed High Prieſt, Annas, to renounce his ſleep, in which aged perſons are apt to indulge themſelves, and to ſit up till midnight, only to enjoy the malicious ſatisfaction of ſeeing Jeſus of Nazareth ſecured and bound? Do we uſe ſuch diligence to become partakers of our bleſſed Saviour? And when we are bleſſed with this divine Gueſt, where are they that ſay with Jacob, 'I will 'not let thee go, except thou bleſs me (*g*)?' Where are they to be found, who willingly forego their eaſe, and their ſleep, when an opportunity offers of ſhewing kindneſs to Chriſt in his diſtreſſed members, and who, with David, riſe up at midnight to praiſe the Lord 'for his righte-'ous judgments (*h*)?' Is it not true, that we are ſurpaſſed by theſe children of darkneſs? as they were much more active and diligent to injure and offend our bleſſed Lord, than we are to render ourſelves acceptable to him.

2. The many weary ſteps of the bleſſed Jeſus, are alſo to be reckoned among his meritorious ſufferings. Our bleſſed Saviour had ſix weary and painful walks to go, antecedently to his paſſion.

(*g*) Gen. xxxii, 26. (*h*) Pſa. cxix. 62.

1. From the Garden of Gethſemanè to the houſe of Annas, the High Prieſt's father-in-law, 2. From Annas to Caiaphas, 3. From Caiaphas to Pilate, 4. From Pilate to Herod, 5. From Herod again to Pilate, 6. From Pilate's ſeat of judgment to Mount Golgotha. Oh, how many weary ſteps did our Saviour tread, during this firſt ignominious walk! He was hurried along in the dead of night, by a tedious, indirect, and rugged way, from the Mount of Olives into the city. Diſgrace and Pain were here his inſeparable companions. Shame marched before him, as he was led bound like a public malefactor, a diſturber of the peace, and an heretic; and Pain, like a hideous phantom, followed his weary footſteps. His ſinleſs ſoul was ſenſibly touched by the rudeſt ſarcaſms, the moſt taunting reflections, and the bittereſt imprecations and blaſphemies, which were poured out like a torrent, by the outrageous multitude. His tender body, which, but a few hours before, had been extremely weakened by his agony and bloody ſweat, was barbarouſly handled, bruiſed, and ſpurned by the inhuman ſoldiers; ſo that the Meſſiah's complaint in the Pſalms, 'They thruſt 'ſore at me, that I might fall; but the Lord 'helped me (*i*),' was here literally fulfilled. The inveterate malice of his enemies was ſuch, that even on Mount Golgotha, at the concluding ſcene of this diſmal tragedy, they did not ceaſe to imbitter his death with all kind of mockeries, and cruel tortures: Hence it may

(*i*) Pſ. cxviii. 13.

eaſily

eaſily be conceived, how great their rage and barbarity muſt have been at the beginning, when they had juſt got our bleſſed Lord in their mercileſs hands. Theſe painful walks, the Son of God would never have undergone, had not our feet departed from the way of God's commandments, and wandered in the devious paths of deſtruction. How many thouſand ſinful walks, eſpecially in the night-time, are taken by the children of Satan, who are engaged in adultery, thefts, murder, drunkenneſs, and other works of darkneſs. Oh, that every one would well examine into the nature of his goings, and the ſecret ways wherein he has walked! Oh, that every one, who hitherto has walked in wicked and deſtructive paths, may reſolve, in honour to his ſuffering-Saviour, to turn his devious ſteps to the way of peace; in his merits to ſeek the forgiveneſs of his ſinful ſteps; and henceforth give himſelf up to the guidance and direction of his good Spirit.

3. The ſuffering Redeemer has, in his ſacred Perſon, ſanctified the abuſive treatment, which his ſuffering members often meet with. Chriſt was here made a ſpectacle, and was led away to Annas, that this crafty and imperious pontiff might have the malicious pleaſure of ſeeing him bound like a felon. This has likewiſe been often the caſe with his ſuffering members; ſo that they may ſay with St. Paul, 'We are made 'a ſpectacle to the world (*k*).' It is, however, a great and unſpeakable comfort to Chriſtian

(*k*) 1 Cor. iv. 9.

Martyrs, when they are made a ſhow of, carried about, as it were, in triumph, and brought before unjuſt and relentleſs judges, through multitudes of the inſulting populace, for the truth's ſake, to conſider, that ſuch ſufferings are ſanctified by the adorable Son of God, who trod the thorny path before them.

4. The natural ties of conſanguinity are often altered into bands of wickedneſs. Annas, being father-in-law to Caiaphas, was willing to indulge him with the impious ſatisfaction of ſeeing the bleſſed Jeſus, whoſe innocence was ſo conſpicuous, bound like a malefactor.

II.

The perſon before whom our bleſſed Saviour was brought in the next place, was Caiaphas, the High Prieſt, and other perſons who were preſent with him.

The chief perſon is here, *firſt*, pointed out by his name, Caiaphas or Caiphas, who was alſo called Joſeph; and, as we have already obſerved, was ſon-in-law to Annas, having married his daughter.

Secondly, He is deſcribed by his office, 'who 'was the High Prieſt that ſame year.' It was not the firſt year of Caiaphas's pontificate, he having ſome years before raiſed himſelf into that high office, by the favour of the Roman Governor*; but this circumſtance, that he 'was 'the High Prieſt that ſame year,' is added by

* *Anno Chriſti* XXVI. *quo ex Valerii Grati, Romani præſidis, favore,* SIMONI *in pontificatu ſucceſſit; ſec.* JAC. USSERII Annales V. T. p. 586. *Ed. Genev.* 1722.

reaſon

reaſon of the great irregularities practiſed at that time, with regard to the high Prieſthood. It ſeldom happened in that age, that any one held this office until death, according to the Divine inſtitution; but the family of Herod, and the Roman Governors, uſed to ſell it to the higheſt bidder; or, from other indirect motives, took it away from one, and beſtowed it on another. In the ſpace of one century, which intervened from the reign of Herod to the deſtruction of Jeruſalem, ſeven and twenty High Prieſts were depoſed, out of twenty-eight, ſome of whom ſcarce bore the dignity a year *, as may be ſeen in Joſephus's Antiquities. For the nearer the Levitical Prieſthood in the houſe of Aaron drew to its abolition, the ſhorter was the duration of that dignity in one perſon. In the year of our Saviour's Paſſion, Caiaphas was ſtill High Prieſt, and continued ſuch for ſeveral years after †, until Vitellius, the Roman Governor, ſubſtituted in his room, Jonathan, the Son of Annas. But how unreaſonable does it appear to human comprehenſion, that the true High Prieſt over the houſe of God, whom God had appointed and confirmed with an oath, ſhould here be obliged to ſtand as a priſoner in bonds before the Jewiſh High Prieſt, whoſe office was only a ſhadow of the real dignity, and importance of his prieſthood? However, it was fitting, that on

* *Vid.* JOSEPHI Antiq. lib. xx. c. 9. *et* SELDENUS, de ſucceſſ. in pontif lib. I c. II.

† *Uſque ad ann. Chr.* XXXV. *Tiberii* XXII. JOSEPHI Antiq. lib. xviii. c. vi.

account of their hypocriſy, theſe falſe ſhepherds of Iſrael ſhould at laſt be 'cut off from 'the tabernacles of Jacob (*l*),' ſince the ſoul of the Lord 'loathed them, and their ſoul alſo 'abhorred him (*m*).'

Thirdly, Caiaphas is deſcribed by a very particular circumſtance; for St. John obſerves that it was he who had ſuggeſted to the Jews, 'that 'it was expedient, that one man ſhould die 'for the people (*n*).' By theſe words we are referred to the eleventh chapter of the ſame Evangeliſt. Our bleſſed Lord having raiſed Lazarus from the dead, by which miracle great numbers were induced to believe on the name of Jeſus; the High Prieſt and Scribes met, and held a conſultation in order to put a ſtop to this growing evil, which threatened the Jewiſh church. 'What do we? ſaid they, (*o*) for 'this man doeth many miracles. If we let 'him thus alone, all men will believe on him; 'and the Romans ſhall come and take away 'both our place and nation.' Upon this, Caiaphas the High Prieſt delivered his ſentiments in the following words: 'Ye know nothing at all, 'nor conſider, that it is expedient for us that one 'man ſhould die for the people, and that the whole 'nation periſh not.' Thus St. John here puts us in mind again of the counſel that Caiaphas had given the Jews on a former occaſion, (and by that means ſhews his diſpoſition towards our bleſſed Saviour,) which was full of bitter enmity

(*l*) Mal. ii. 12. (*m*) Zach. xi. 8. (*n*) John xviii. 14.
(*o*) John xi. 47, &c.

and

and flagrant injuſtice. For the meaning of his words ſeems to be this: "Suppoſing this Jeſus "of Nazareth to be an innocent perſon; yet "is it better, for once, to ſet aſide the rules of "juſtice and equity, and make a ſacrifice of "them to the public welfare, than that the "Jewiſh nation ſhould be deprived of its li-"berty; for it is to be apprehended, that the "Romans will avail themſelves of the diſturb-"ances that are like to ariſe from this man's "doctrines, and come and take away both our "place and nation." All this he ſpoke with the greateſt acrimony, ſo as even to reproach the Prieſts, *&c.* his own collegues, with their weakneſs and want of penetration, becauſe they did not ſee the neceſſity of putting Jeſus of Nazareth to death at all events. 'Ye know nothing 'at all.' As if he had ſaid, "When immi-"nent danger hangs over our heads, we muſt "not ſtand conſulting with conſcience, but "bring the affair to a ſpeedy concluſion, that "we may ſave ourſelves and the whole nation "from impending ruin." Thus Caiaphas is repreſented to us, by the beloved diſciple, as a perſon of a hardened conſcience, full of hatred and malice againſt the ſacred perſon of the Lord Jeſus, and of a conſummate effrontery. It was, probably, matter of great Joy to him that this iniquitous and bloody advice againſt Jeſus of Nazareth was carried into execution during his pontificate. Nay, it may be preſumed he received many congratulations on ſo glorious an event. This is the holy man, cried the Jews,

who, by his indefatigable zeal, delivered our church from that vile heretic and incendiary, and ſaved it from utter deſtruction. Thus the undiſcerning multitude look upon that as their happineſs, which is their greateſt misfortune. 'The eaſe * of the ſimple ſhall ſlay them, and 'the proſperity of fools ſhall deſtroy them (*p*).' Such is the character of the chief perſon in the aſſembly before which our bleſſed Lord was brought.

The reſt of the aſſiſtants who compoſed the council are deſcribed in the following words: 'The chief Prieſts, and Elders of the people, 'and the Scribes came together.' Hence it appears that moſt of the members of the Sanhedrim ſeem to have been preſent here, in order to conſult on the propereſt means to bring Jeſus of Nazareth to a trial. This was a very extraordinary meeting, as it was not cuſtomary in caſes where life was concerned to hold a ſeſſions in the night time; and it was, at the ſame time, a very auguſt aſſembly. The chief Prieſts, *i. e.* perſons deſcended from ſeveral High Prieſts, ſome of whom had alſo formerly bore that office, were perſons in high eſteem and veneration on account of their high birth; the Elders were reſpectable for their great authority among the people, and the Scribes for their

* The Engliſh text is rendered, 'the turning away;' but the marginal note has it as above. משובת פתים *Perverſitas fatuorum*, juxta Chaldæum; vel juxta AB. ESRAM & R. LEVI, *requies otioſa proſperitas*, quâ ad nova peccata ſubinde alliciuntur. vide BUXTORF. *W.*

(*p*) Prov. i. 32.

erudition

erudition and ſkill in explaining the Jewiſh law. However, the prince of darkneſs was the preſident of this court; ſo that juſtice was little to be expected here. It was an aſſembly, of which Jacob would have ſaid, as he did of Simeon and Levi, the anceſtors of this unjuſt judge, 'O my ſoul, come not thou into their ſecret; 'unto their aſſembly mine honour be not thou 'united! curſed be their anger, for it was fierce; 'and their wrath for it was cruel (*q*).'

It was not without the Divine decree, that the Son of God was now brought before this wicked and perverſe generation. Here Shiloh was to make his appearance at a time whilſt the Lawgiver was ſtill among the Jews (*r*). Here the true Sacrifice for the ſins of the whole world was to be brought unto the Prieſt (*s*). Here the Foundation and Corner-ſtone, which God was to lay in Sion, was to be ſhewn to the builders, and by them to be deſpiſed and rejected (*t*). Here He that is to be the Supreme Judge of all mankind was to ſtand among the mighty in the Jewiſh congregation (*u*), and with his eyes to behold their iniquity (*x*). Here He who was made under the law was brought before judges ſitting in Moſes's chair, that He might hereafter with the greater right 'ſpoil 'principalities, magiſtracies, and powers *, and 'make an open ſhew of them, triumphing over 'them (*y*).' This is the counſel of the all-

(*q*) Gen. xlix. 6, 7. (*r*) Gen. xlix. 10. (*s*) Lev. xvii. 5.
(*t*) Pſalm cxxiii. 22. Acts iv. 11. (*u*) Pſalm lxxxii. 1.
(*x*) Zach. ix. 8. * ἀρχας και ἐξουσιας. magiſtrates and powers. Luke xii. 11. (*y*) Col. ii. 15.

wiſe God, which we are to admire in permitting Chriſt thus to be brought before the ſpiritual court of the Jews: And we may well ſay with the Prophet, 'the Lord is wonderful in 'counſel, and excellent in working (z).' But we ſhall make ſome obſervations on this circumſtance in our Saviour's ſufferings.

1. Chriſtians are ſtill frequently ſacrificed, as it is pretended, to the public tranquillity. This is the way of the world: they firſt raiſe diſturbances and commotions about the doctrines of Chriſtianity, and afterwards pretend that true Chriſtians are ſuch a refractory, turbulent ſet of men, that it is abſolutely neceſſary for the public welfare to make a ſacrifice of them, either by depriving them of their employments, or putting them to death. Theſe ſtratagems of the world were alſo conſpicuous in the ſufferings of our bleſſed Saviour: An uſeful leſſon to the children of God, that they may not be offended, if it ſhould happen to be their caſe, that the public peace and tranquillity ſhould be judged to depend on their being baniſhed or put to death.

2. Thoſe minds which are bold, enterpriſing, and void of ſhame, are Satan's fitteſt tools. Of this we have an inſtance in Caiaphas, who had obtained to the higheſt pitch of ſhameleſs audacity. No other perſon was fitter for Satan's purpoſe, when he deſigned to wound the heel of the woman's bleſſed Seed. Therefore a man has little reaſon to account it a happineſs to be

(z) Iſa. xxviii. 29.

of

of a forward, raſh, and ſhameleſs diſpoſition; ſo that he can undertake the moſt enormous crimes, and carry into execution ſuch iniquitous deſigns, as others, of a tender conſcience, will not be concerned in. On the contrary, ſuch an impious boldneſs is a ſign of a ſeared conſcience. Theſe are the engines which the devil and antichriſt uſe to the greateſt advantage, in their moſt deſtructive attempts on the kingdom of Jeſus Chriſt. But their reward will be according to their work.

3. He, who conſiders only the external dignity of the enemies of Chriſt, may eaſily be dazzled and ſeduced by their appearance. We have ſeen what great perſonages were aſſembled together in the houſe of Caiaphas the High Prieſt; yet theſe Satan made uſe of, as his inſtruments to condemn the innocent Son of God to death. In this aſſembly the moſt aged and refined politicians, and the profoundeſt ſcholars, notwithſtanding all their wiſdom, knew not God; but rejected and 'crucified the Lord of glo-'ry (*a*).' Therefore let no one be dazzled by ſuch external advantages as a high character, an eminent poſt, ſplendid titles, a reputation of ſanctity, and profound learning; qualifications which we often meet with in the enemies of God's cauſe: but let him pray to God to illuminate his eyes, that he may ſee through all theſe thick vapours into the very hearts of the enemies of Chriſt, which are filled with hatred, envy, malice, and bloody devices; and then, what-

(*a*) 1 Cor. ii. 7, 8.

ever

ever be the external advantages of ſuch men, he will never ſuffer himſelf to be blinded or ſeduced by them.

4. It is to Chriſt's ſtanding before the tribunal of men that we owe our diſcharge from the juſt tribunal of God. We had tranſgreſſed the firſt and ſecond Table of the Divine Law; and for that violation, were to have been brought before the awful tribunal of God, and there condemned. But our Surety, who hath perfectly fulfiled both Tables, here condeſcends to be brought before the ſpiritual court, which takes cognizance of the breach of the firſt Table; and afterwards before the civil tribunal, whoſe province it was to puniſh ſins againſt the ſecond; and before both tribunals to be falſly accuſed, and unjuſtly ſentenced to die, that we, by his innocence, may be freed from the juſt accuſation of the Law. Therefore whoever with true penitence acknowledges his tranſgreſſions of God's commandments, though he be as it were accuſed in the ſpiritual Court of his own conſcience, and condemned by the Divine Law as a malefactor, if he humbly prays unto the Lord not to enter into ſtrict judgment with his ſervant, and by a lively faith lays hold of the merit of his ſpotleſs Redeemer, who ſtood as a malefactor before an inexorable tribunal, 'he ſhall not come into 'condemnation; but is paſſed from death unto 'life (*b*).' However, this exemption from judgment and condemnation, which was purchaſed at ſo dear a rate by the the bleſſed Jeſus,

(*b*) John v. 24.

is

is of no benefit to the impenitent and unconverted. Such a one muſt be brought before the Supreme tribunal, and ſentenced to death with the ſtricteſt juſtice. Happy is it for us, when we judge ourſelves; for then the Lord will not viſit us with his ſore and alarming judgments.

THE PRAYER.

O Thou faithful and loving Saviour! we thank thee for thy unparelleled condeſcenſion in ſuffering thyſelf to be brought before an earthly tribunal, to deliver us from judgment before the tribunal of heaven. Praiſed be thy name, who haſt paſſed through every circumſtance of contempt and ill uſage, and paved the way for thy poor diſtreſſed members, that in following thee they may, without murmuring, get over every ſtumbling block and ſtone of offence. O bleſſed Jeſus! keep our hearts, we pray thee, from taking any offence at thee, or thy Croſs; and give us grace, that from thy ſufferings before this relentleſs tribunal, we may derive ſufficient ſtrength to our ſouls that we may hold out in all perſecutions, and continue faithful unto thee till death. Grant this for the ſake of thy meritorious ſufferings. Amen.

CONSIDERATION II.

The first fall of Peter *the Apoſtle.*

'(a) SIMON Peter followed Jeſus afar off, 'and ſo did another diſciple, to the pa-'lace of the High Prieſt. That other diſciple 'was known unto the High Prieſt, and went in 'with Jeſus into the palace of the High Prieſt. 'But Peter ſtood at the door without. Then went 'out that other diſciple who was known to the 'High Prieſt, and ſpake unto her that kept the 'door, and brought in Peter. And the ſervants 'and officers ſtood there, who had made a fire 'of coals, for it was cold; and they warmed 'themſelves: And Peter went in, and ſat down 'among the ſervants, and warmed himſelf at 'the fire, that he might ſee the end. Then 'the damſel, who kept the door of the High 'Prieſt, beheld Peter, as he warmed himſelf 'and ſat by the fire, and earneſtly looked 'upon him, and ſaid, Thou alſo waſt with 'Jeſus of Nazareth the Galilean. Art thou 'not one of this man's diſciples? But he denied 'it before them all, ſaying, Woman, I am 'not; I know him not, neither underſtand I 'what thou ſayeſt. And he went into the 'porch; and the cock crew.'

In theſe words we have an account of Peter's firſt fall, in which is related,

(a) Matt. xxvi. 58. 69, 70. Mark xiv. 54, 66—68. Luke xxii. 54—57. John xviii. 15—18.

First,

Firſt, the occaſion of it.

Secondly, the grievous fall itſelf.

I.

This account of the occaſion of Peter's fall mentions, *firſt*, the remote cauſe of it; and *ſecondly*, the nearer or immediate cauſe.

Firſt, As to the remote cauſe of his fall, two circumſtances prepared the way for this heinous ſin, namely, the preſumptuous following of Chriſt; and his indiſcreetly entering into the High Prieſt's palace.

The firſt remote cauſe then, was his preſumptuous following of Chriſt: How! would one think, that the following our bleſſed Lord ſhould ſo far miſlead a man as to deny Chriſt? It was even ſo. 'Simon Peter followed Jeſus afar 'off, and ſo did another diſciple, to the High 'Prieſt's palace.'

He who followed Jeſus was Simon Peter, the oldeſt of all our Saviour's diſciples. He is here diſtinguiſhed from all the reſt of the diſciples. Of the others it is ſaid, 'Then all the diſciples 'forſook him, and fled (*b*).' Peter, indeed, in the firſt ſurpriſe had alſo run away; but obſerving that no body purſued him, and recollecting his promiſe, *viz.* 'Lord, why cannot I follow thee now? 'I will lay down my life for thy ſake (*c*); though 'all ſhould be offended becauſe of thee, yet will 'I never be offended (*d*),' he turned back, and followed Chriſt at a diſtance. His following the Lord Jeſus is certainly a good and commen-

(*b*) Matt. xxvi. 56. (*c*) John xiii. 37.
(*d*) Matt. xxvi. 33.

dable

dable action; and Peter had given the firſt proof of his love to the bleſſed Jeſus, when, as ſoon as Chriſt ſaid, 'Follow me!' he forſook all, and commenced his diſciple. And even when he now followed his Maſter, all the love he bore to the Lord Jeſus was not extinguiſhed in his heart. But this love was mixed with many imperfections, ſo that Peter in following Chriſt at this juncture fell into ſeveral ſins. He firſt ſinned againſt God's providence, becauſe he put it, as it were, to the teſt, whether it would protect and preſerve him when he obſtinately plunged himſelf into danger? He ſinned againſt his Maſter, by preſumptuouſly acting contrary to what Jeſus had expreſſly told him, 'Whi-'ther I go, thou canſt not follow me now (*e*);' which words of Chriſt he by this action would confute, and ſhew that, what his Maſter had declared impoſſible, he could nevertheleſs perform. Laſtly, he treſpaſſed againſt his fellow-diſciples, by leaving their ſociety, and thruſting himſelf among the enemies of Chriſt; nay, Peter, in his heart, exhalted himſelf above all of them, and deſigned to diſgrace them by his reſolution in following his Lord and Maſter. Theſe circumſtances ſerve to ſhew, that Peter was not to be commended for following Chriſt at this juncture.

His companion, in following his Maſter at this time, was another diſciple. By that other diſciple ſome commentators underſtand St. John; but there is little probability that that diſciple

(*e*) John xiii. 36.

was

was ſo well known in the High Prieſt's houſe. Others ſuppoſe that other diſciple to have been Judas the traitor. He indeed might have been very well known in the High Prieſt's houſe; but it is hardly probable that Peter would have aſſociated with him, unleſs he had very artfully diſſembled his villainy, and induced Peter to believe, that he was entirely innocent as to Chriſt's being taken in the garden; and that by the kiſs he meant only to give his Maſter an intimation to ſecure himſelf againſt his enemies, who were coming on, and to make all poſſible haſte out of the garden. But the moſt probable conjecture is, that this was not one of the twelve Apoſtles, but ſome reputable inhabitant of Jeruſalem, who was in his heart ſecretly convinced of the truth of our Saviour's doctrine; but for fear of the excommunication with which the Sanhedrim had threatened all that ſhould profeſs the doctrine of Chriſt, concealed his ſentiments, and, on account of ſome affairs he had to tranſact in the High Prieſts houſe, was known to his domeſtics. Oh, how is the number of the diſciples and followers of the bleſſed Jeſus now decreaſed! how few attend him at this critical time; whereas the people attended him by thouſands, and followed him into the moſt ſolitary deſarts before. But Peter and another diſciple were all that now followed Chriſt.

The manner of Peter's following our bleſſed Lord is deſcribed in theſe words, 'Peter followed Jeſus afar off.' His throbbing heart ſtruggled between love and fear. A kind of

ſpurious love of Chriſt drew him nearer, and a well grounded fear induced him to draw back again. Thus he lagged behind, lurking afar off in the dark, with a wounded conſcience; having very heinouſly offended by his temerity and confidence, in his preceding diſcourſe with his Lord and Maſter. Here he exhibits the condition of us all, as diſcribed by the Prophet: 'All we like ſheep have gone aſtray; we have 'turned every one to his own way (*f*).'

Laſtly, The place to which Peter followed his Chriſt was the High Prieſt's houſe; for being deſirous of ſeeing how it would go with his Maſter, he drew near the place where the bleſſed Jeſus had been carried, after he had been bound.

The ſecond remote occaſion of Peter's fall was his entering into the High Prieſt's palace. Here we may obſerve what paſſed before; and likewiſe what happened in the palace.

The preceding circumſtance was, that the other ſecret diſciple of Chriſt was admitted into the court among thoſe who brought Jeſus thither. For being known to the High Prieſt's domeſtics, he got admiſſion, as he was little ſuſpected of being a follower of Jeſus of Nazareth. Hence it is very probable, that this perſon, whoever he was, had carefully concealed his favourable opinion of the doctrines of Jeſus Chriſt; otherwiſe he would have been ſtrictly forbid to enter into the High Prieſt's houſe. He could therefore by no other means gain admit-

(*f*) Iſa. liii. 6.

tance there, but by putting on the maſk of hypocriſy. Had he been ſo hard preſſed as Peter was, he would undoubtedly have denied Chriſt with the ſame peremptory aſſurance. But the Father of mercies had compaſſion on his weakneſs, and would not ſuffer him to be tempted above what he was able to bear; eſpecially as ſo much could not be required from him, as from Peter, who had received more grace, and been fore-warned of his danger. In the mean time, while this diſciple was in the palace, Peter was obliged to ſtand without at the door. It may be ſuppoſed that the door of the houſe was carefully guarded, as there was ſuch a multitude of people at that time at Jeruſalem on account of the feſtival, leſt a tumult ſhould ariſe, and ſome of his followers ſhould force their way into the palace, and reſcue Jeſus out of the hands of his enemies. Now it behoved Peter to fall upon his knees, and intreat God that he might not fall into temptation. But as he neglected this precaution, and too much confided in himſelf; as he had already proceeded beyond the limits of the ſafe-conduct which the Lord Jeſus had procured him, and even beyond the intention of his Maſter, he is obliged at laſt to purchaſe wiſdom by ſad experience.

What happened to Peter in the palace is deſcribed in the following words: 'Then went 'out that other diſciple, who was known to the 'High Prieſt, and ſpake to her that kept the 'door, and brought in Peter.' This diſciple cannot be ſuppoſed to have had any ill intention,

and might imagine that he conferred a favour on Peter, by procuring him admiſſion into the High Prieſt's palace. Peter likewiſe probably might think it a great happineſs that the young man got him admitted into the palace; whereas it proved his greateſt misfortune. From this remote cauſe of Peter's firſt fall, before we proceed to conſider the immediate cauſe of it, we ſhall deduce the following truths.

1. A good inclination, if it be not directed and guided by the Word of God, is very deceitful and dangerous. Peter thought he acted a laudable part in following the Lord Jeſus afar off, and venturing into the High Prieſt's palace. But as in this his good intention he paid no regard to the word of Chriſt, *viz.* 'Thou canſt 'not follow me now,' it proved a moſt dangerous ſnare to him. The other diſciple had alſo a friendly intention in procuring Peter admittance into the palace; and yet he was a concurring cauſe of Peter's falling into the greateſt misfortune. This is the caſe of many thouſands. If they have a good intention in any particular action, you can never convince them that they act amiſs, though they cannot produce any command, or promiſe, of God to warrant their proceeding; nay, they will not be adviſed, until their fall unhappily convinces them of their temerity and want of due reflection. Good intentions are the ſources of all the idolatrous worſhip, and all the falſe and hypocritical devotions, practiſed in the church of Rome. On this occaſion therefore, we muſt conſider that our

good

good intentions are mere blind impulſes, when they are not conducted by the ſuperior light of God's will, manifeſted in his Word, but rather run counter to it; and that the very beſt intention can never juſtify an action that is eſſentially evil.

2. An acquaintance with rich and great perſonages, who are enemies to goodneſs and virtue, is a dangerous ſnare to weak and unſettled minds. It is very probable, that the intimacy of this ſecret diſciple of Chriſt in the family of the impious High Prieſt was an extreme detriment to his ſpiritual welfare, reſtraining him from a ſincere faith in Chriſt, and a bold profeſſion of his heavenly doctrine. He was unwilling to loſe the acquaintance he had contracted in the palace, which was attended with many temporal advantages; ſo that he became a wretched hypocrite, and ſaw himſelf obliged, on this account, to diſguiſe the conviction he had of the truth of our Saviour's doctrine. This is ſtill the way of the world. For inſtance, if a young Divine has a powerful patron who oppoſes all goodneſs, it may prove a dangerous ſnare to him; ſince, for fear of loſing his favour, or forfeiting the preferment he is in expectation of, he not only proves an unfaithful ſteward of the Grace he has received; but to ingratiate himſelf farther with his patron, depreciates true piety and virtue. Fixed and undaunted minds may profit by an acquaintance with the great and powerful, and contribute to the advancement of Chriſt's kingdom; but weak and timorous

ſouls are much more likely to be ſeduced by it to diſſimulation and hypocriſy. We ought not therefore to force ourſelves into ſuch an acquaintance; but when, without our own ſeeking, we are introduced to the rich and great by the ſecret guidance of God; we muſt uſe the opportunity with fear and trembling, and exert a conſtant vigilance over the motions of our ſouls. A true Chriſtian muſt fortify himſelf with a firm reſolution rather to draw on himſelf the contempt and hatred of all the world, than preſumptuoſly offend an all-powerful God, deny his ſacred truths, and violate his own conſcience. But if we offer to prevaricate; if we would fain be the diſciples of Chriſt, and alſo preſerve the eſteem and favour of the world; the infallible conſequence will be, that we ſhall be enſnared by it into diſſimulation and hypocriſy.

Secondly, As to the more immediate cauſe of Peter's firſt fall, two circumſtances concurred to draw him into this ſnare, namely, his being in company with the ſervants and officers; and the ſpeech of the damſel who kept the door.

Peter's being in company with the officers, *&c.* is mentioned in theſe words: 'And the 'ſervants and officers ſtood there, and had made 'a fire of coals, for it was cold; and they warmed 'themſelves.' This happened in the night-time, in the month of March, when the nights are pretty ſharp in Paleſtine, on account of the great dews which uſually fall there at that time of the year. On this account, the officers and ſervants, who had brought Jeſus from the Mount of Olives into

into the city, made a coal-fire in the hall of the palace, to warm themſelves; and probably their diſcourſe turned on Jeſus, whom they had juſt apprehended. Peter alſo went, and ſat among the ſervants, and warmed himſelf by the fire. St. John ſays he ſtood; but the other Evangeliſts, that he ſat. But this may be eaſily reconciled, by conſidering, that a man under extreme perplexity and perturbation of mind ſometimes riſes up and walks about, then ſits down again, continually changing his poſture; ſo that his outward deportment, as it were, expreſſes the inward diſorder of his mind.

Peter, in thus mingling with the company of officers and ſervants, might have had ſeveral deſigns in view. One might be to warm himſelf at the fire; but as he had been a fiſherman, and conſequently toiled at his buſineſs many cold nights, he muſt have been enured to the cold; ſo that this could not be his principal view, which was, that he might ſee what would be the end or iſſue of the affair. He was alſo deſirous of hearing what the ſervants thought of Jeſus, and was curious to know their opinion of the trial, *&c.* But he had, long before, heard from the mouth of the bleſſed Jeſus himſelf, how this affair would end; namely, that he ſhould be delivered up into the hands of the Gentiles; that they would ſcourge him, revile him, and put him to death on the croſs. This prophecy of Chriſt had, for a long time, ſlipped out of Peter's mind; and therefore, he draws near to ſee how things would terminate, and crouds amongſt the officers and ſer-

vants, the better to conceal himſelf, and to paſs for one of the multitude who had brought Jeſus thither. Had he ſtood alone in ſome corner, he would have been ſoon ſuſpected. Therefore, he took care, by mixing among the croud, that the trouble his mind laboured under ſhould not in the leaſt be obſerved, and, we may ſuppoſe, was not totally ſilent; and thus he was perſuaded, that he could not be detected. But even by theſe very means was he betrayed; for by the light of the fire he was the ſooner known. Thus it happens, when a man departs from the means which God is pleaſed to employ for his preſervation, that thoſe things often prove the occaſion of his fall, by which he thinks to avoid it.

Another immediate, or nearer cauſe of Peter's grievous ſin was the ſpeech of the Damſel, who kept the door; of whom it is ſaid, that 'ſhe 'earneſtly looked on Peter;' and alſo ſpoke to him. For, as Peter was near the fire, the blaze of light rendered him more conſpicuous; ſo that the Damſel, who kept the door, recollected that ſhe had ſeen his face before, and knew him. She therefore reſolved to ſpeak to him; and, according to the accounts given by the Evangeliſts harmoniſed, three gradations are to be obſerved in her words.

Firſt, St. John ſays, ſhe aſked him, 'Art not 'thou alſo one of this Man's diſciples?' From theſe words, it is eaſily ſeen that this maid was far from being a friend to Jeſus Chriſt, as ſhe avoids the mention of his name, contemptuouſly calling him 'this Man.' This is the common

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cuſtom of the world. When the maſters of great families have an averſion to truth and piety, and ridicule and decry the good and virtuous on all occaſions, their ſervants and domeſtics imitate their ill example. Upon this, probably Peter was ſilent; and ſeemed as if he did not hear her, or imagined ſhe ſpoke to ſome other perſon.

Secondly, She looked earneſtly on him, and ſaid, according to the accounts of St. Matthew and St. Mark, 'And thou alſo waſt with Jeſus 'of Nazareth;' or as St. Matthew ſays, 'with 'Jeſus of Galilee;' for Nazareth was a town of Galilee. She calls him a Galilean, by way of contempt; for it was a common proverb among the Jews, that no prophet ariſeth out of Galilee (*g*). Hence the Roman Emperor, Julian the Apoſtate, uſed alſo out of contempt to call Jeſus Chriſt The Galilean, and the Chriſtians, Galileans.

Thirdly, The Damſel informs the Officers and ſervants of it, ſaying, according to St. Luke, 'This Man was alſo with him.' This we may ſuppoſe drew on Peter the eyes of all that were ſtanding about the fire. The only crime with which he was here acuſed, was this, namely, that he was one of Jeſus's diſciples. But this accuſation, in ſuch a place, and at ſuch a juncture, was ſufficient to bring any one in danger of his life. Peter therefore did not ſtick at clearing himſelf from this accuſation by a direct lye, that he might eſcape the danger that threatened him. From theſe two immediate cauſes of Pe-

(*g*) John vii. 52.

ter's

ter's fall, we ſhall make the following obſervations.

1. When a perſon has once departed from the ways of God, every ſtep he takes brings him nearer his fall. Here we may plainly ſee, how Peter went on ſtep by ſtep into temptation. Firſt he betook himſelf to flight with the other diſciples. Then he ſhould have recollected the words of Chriſt, *viz.* 'Ye ſhall be ſcattered, 'and leave me alone;' and it is there ſubjoined by our bleſſed Lord, addreſſing himſelf particularly to Peter, 'Thou ſhalt deny me thrice.' He ought to have conſidered, that the former part of this prediction was already fulfilled; and how eaſily might the latter alſo prove true! But he truſted too much to his own ſtrength; and as he had ſaid, he would go with Jeſus to priſon and to death, ſo his temerity prompted him to turn back and follow his Maſter at a diſtance. He proceeded ſo far, as to venture even to the door of the palace, where Chriſt was to undergo his trial. However, he might ſtill have been ſafe here, and been informed of the iſſue of his Maſter's trial. At laſt he went into the palace; but this was not enough, he even crouded among the ſervants. All this, Peter imagined to be only the effect of a ſtrong faith; whereas it was in reality nothing but extreme raſhneſs. So proud is frail man, that he will not confeſs his weakneſs and irreſolution. If he is admoniſhed to beware of keeping ill company, he thinks he is no longer a child, and knows how to govern himſelf. When he is in ſuch company, he cannot

cannot bear to paſs for a preciſe, gloomy, and unſociable perſon; but joins with the reſt in committing a thouſand things, which are diſpleaſing to God, and wound his conſcience. However, he will be upon his guard againſt any groſs and enormous ſins, that he may not caſt any blemiſh on his character, *&c.* In the mean time, Satan, into whoſe dominion he has wilfully ventured, excites him ſtill farther on, and draws the ſnare of temptation nearer and nearer; ſo that at laſt he proceeds to drunkenneſs and intemperance, and then to other heinous ſins, and ſcandalous debaucheries. Therefore, let none of us be raſh and preſumptuous, but humble and diffident. Let none confide too much in himſelf, but carefully avoid every occaſion of ſinning. A man cannot promiſe himſelf the Divine protection, and aſſiſtance of the Holy Spirit, if he himſelf willingly runs into dangers and trials.

2. The diſciples of Chriſt cannot long be concealed among the multitude of the profligate children of this world. Had Peter, like the reſt, inveighed againſt Chriſt, and ridiculed his doctrines, he would have avoided all ſuſpicion. But as he remained ſilent, and poſſibly, was ſometimes unable to ſuppreſs his ſighs, being under ſuch a violent perturbation of mind, he was ſoon ſuſpected to be one of Jeſus's diſciples. Thus it is ſtill with the children of God, when they mingle with the wicked: They are not long undiſtinguiſhed from thoſe about them. Their deportment, their words and actions are ſo different

different from thoſe of the bulk of mankind, that they are ſoon diſcovered; and others think it ſtrange, that they do not run with them to the ſame exceſs of riot, and prophaneneſs *. Therefore, however they may diſſemble and conceal themſelves, they never remain long undiſcovered. God himſelf will bring them to light, that they may be put to the teſt, whether they will ſuffer contempt or ill-treatment for the ſake of Jeſus Chriſt. Whoever does not think himſelf ſtrong enough to bear this, cannot be too cautious in avoiding the company of the wicked, and profane; otherwiſe it will prove a dangerous ſnare to him.

3. In times of public perſecution, it is accounted the greateſt of crimes, to be a diſciple

* *Notatu digna ſunt, quæ* MATTH. BERNEGGERUS *refert in* Obſerv. Miſc. *Obſ.* xxi. *ex* HENR. STEPHANI *Tr. Gall. de* conformitate miraculorum veterum cum hodiernis, *qui, Nolo,* inquit, *hîc omittere rem cunctis hodie perſpectiſſimam, quæ tamen poſteritati forſitan incredibilis videbitur; quòd nimirum haud ita pridem, inter præcipua argumenta, quibus aliquis convinci queat, à Romanâ religione deſciviſſe, ac proinde vivicomburium meruiſſe, iſta quoque numerari cæperunt,* Si quis non ſcortaretur; ſi commeſſationibus et ebrietati deditus non eſſet; ſi non pejeraret; ſi ſcripturam allegaret. *Adeo ut quis Lutheranus, coram epiſcopo ſuo, Lutheranæ hæreſeos reus factus, abſolutionem obtinuerit, et ab hæreſi purus fuerit pronuntiatus, eò quòd in ipſo nullum iſtorum, quæ dixi, argumentorum deprehenderetur. Quâ de re factum eſt hoc Epigramma:*

Eſſe Lutheranum rumor te, Gaurice, clamat;
Sed tuus antiſtes te tamen eſſe negat.
Tam ſcortaris, ait, quàm ſi vel epiſcopus eſſes,
Et potas dubiam pervigil uſque diem.
Nec memor es Chriſti, niſi quum jurare lubebit,
Nec ſcis ſcripturæ vel breve Iota ſacræ,
Nempe per hæc ſuevit nunquam fallentia ſigna,
Ille vigil ſanas noſcere paſtor oves.

of

of Chriſt. The damſel did not charge Peter with any criminal action; but his whole fault was, being Jeſus's diſciple. This was a prelude to what was afterwards practiſed in the Heathen perſecutions. When any one was by them convicted of being a Chriſtian, he was ſure to forfeit his life. It was common among the Heathens to obſerve, that ſuch a perſon was a worthy good man; but then he was a Chriſtian *. Such an averſion had the Heathens conceived for this name, that they looked upon thoſe who were diſtinguiſhed by it, as an execrable ſet of men. And thus the prediction of Chriſt was fulfilled, namely, 'They ſhall lay hands 'on you, and perſecute you, for my name's 'ſake (*h*).'

II.

In the account of Peter's firſt denial is mentioned, *firſt*, the witneſſes: 'He denied it before 'them all,' before the whole croud of ſervants, *&c.* who were in the court together; and by this means, gave public offence. *Secondly*, The words that he ſpoke; which, according to the harmoniſed account of the Evangeliſts, are as follows. 'I am not;' I am no diſciple of Jeſus of Nazareth. But that was not all; he farther added, 'I know him not;' I have no acquaintance with the man, and have no manner of connection with him. Nay, 'I know not what

* Bonus vir Caius, Sejus; tantùm quòd Chriſtianus; *ut refert* TERTULLIANUS in apolog. c. 3. Adde PLINII confeſſionem, *qui* Nomen ipſum, etiamſi flagitiis careat, *interdum* punitum *fuiſſe prodit.* Lib. x. Epiſt. 97.

(*h*) Luke xxi. 12, 17.

'thou

'thou ſayeſt;' I underſtand not your meaning. So ſtrongly did Peter diſſemble, as if he never had any thing to do with Jeſus of Nazareth, and did not in the leaſt care what became of him. At theſe words of the Damſel, he was, as it were, thunder-ſtruck and; all his boaſted reſolution diſappeared at this one attack. He thought the High Prieſt's ſervants would immediately lay hold of him, bind him, and carry him before the council to be tried; who would immediately ſentence him to die. Thus he already began to faint, only at the diſtant appearance of danger.

Here I muſt beg leave to obſerve, that the following incident, according to St. Matthew's account of it, ſeems to be a wiſe intimation to Peter of what would befal him at the time of our Saviour's ſufferings. This remarkable incident is thus related by the Evangeliſt (*i*). 'And ſtraightway Jeſus conſtrained his diſciples 'to get into a ſhip, and to go before him unto 'the other ſide, while he ſent the multitudes 'away. And when he had ſent the multitudes 'away, he went up into a mountain apart to 'pray: And when the evening was come, he was 'there alone. But the ſhip was now in the 'midſt of the ſea, toſſed with waves; for the 'wind was contrary. And in the fourth watch 'of the night, Jeſus went unto them, walking 'on the ſea. And when the diſciples ſaw 'him walking on the ſea, they were troubled, 'ſaying, It is a ſpirit: And they cried out for

(*i*) Matth. xiv. 22——33.

' fear.

'fear. But ſtraightway Jeſus ſpake unto them, 'ſaying, Be of good chear; it is I; be not afraid. 'And Peter anſwered him, and ſaid, Lord, if it be 'thou, bid me come unto thee on the water. And 'he ſaid, Come. And when Peter was come down 'out of the ſhip, he walked on the water, to 'go to Jeſus. But when he ſaw the wind boiſte-'rous, he was afraid; and beginning to ſink, 'he cried, Lord ſave me! And immediately 'Jeſus ſtretched forth his hand, and caught 'him, and ſaid unto him, O thou of little 'faith! wherefore didſt thou doubt? And when 'they were come into the ſhip, the wind ceaſed.'

Here we may conſider,

Firſt, The agitated ſea, is an emblem of the tumultuous Jewiſh populace, who were inſtigated by their Prieſts and Elders, to rage with all poſſible violence againſt Jeſus and his diſciples.

Secondly, The bleſſed Jeſus, during this ſtorm, was abſent from his diſciples, who were then ſeparated from him, and toſſed by the outrageous waves; and he walked on the ſea, without being ſwallowed up by the waters. This clearly repreſents to us, that our bleſſed Lord, in the moſt difficult and violent temptations, never permitted himſelf to be overcome by the ſtrength of them; but by his confidence, obedience, and love towards his heavenly Father, remained firm and unmoved, and trod the boiſterous ſurge under his feet; while his poor diſciples who, by flight, had ſeparated themſelves from him, were driven from one place to another like a ſhip at the mercy of the waves.

Thirdly,

Thirdly, Peter conceited that he had more ſtrength than in reality he was poſſeſſed of; for he alone of all the diſciples, on ſeeing Jeſus walking on the ſea, deſired that he might come to him down on the raging deep. Thus the ſame Peter deſired of his Lord and Maſter, that he might accompany him to priſon and to death, and conſequently undergo the ſame ſevere trials with Chriſt himſelf; whereas the bleſſed Jeſus alone was able to go through the conflict.

Fourthly, Chriſt permitted Peter, on his own requeſt, to walk on the ſea and come to him. So the Lord Jeſus ſeems to permit, that Peter alone ſhould follow him afar off into the High Prieſt's palace, while the other diſciples remained behind; in order to put him to the proof, whether he could, like his Maſter, walk on the tumultuous waves of trials and temptations.

Fifthly, When Peter firſt ventured to commit himſelf to the boiſterous waves, they had no power over him; but when his confidence in Chriſt began to ſhake at the riſing of a ſudden ſtorm, then Peter ſunk, and was like to periſh. This ſame Peter, after he had mingled with the tumultuous multitude which foamed and raged, like the troubled ocean, againſt Chriſt, was no ſooner queſtioned by a ſervant-maid, but his courage forſook him, and he was brought to the very brink of final deſtruction; ſo that the waves of trial very nearly ſwallowed him up.

Sixthly, When Peter was in ſuch imminent danger, our bleſſed Lord was graciouſly pleaſed, not

not only to ſtretch forth his hand and ſupport him, but liſted him out of the water and ſecured his goings. In like manner, Chriſt was moved with tender compaſſion to Peter in the inſtance before us, caſt a look at him as he was ſinking, and by that means moved him to repentance, and confirmed him in his former faith.

Laſtly, Peter being thus ſupported by Chriſt, walked firmly with him on the water, after the example of his Lord and Maſter. This ſame Peter, being raiſed again from his grievous fall, undauntedly preached the Goſpel of Chriſt, notwithſtanding a variety of perſecutions, and even ſtrengthened his brethren. Thus the Lord Jeſus, in his gracious wiſdom, a whole year before the event, ſeems, by this incident, to have ſet before Peter's eyes what would afterwards befal him.

But to return from this digreſſion. Peter, after giving the firſt proof of his weakneſs, this beginning of his ſinking under his trial, went out into the court, *i. e.* ſtole away from the croud of ſervants and ſoldiers to the porch, near the gate which opened out of the court into the ſtreet; and behold, 'the cock crew.' He found this to be a dangerous place; his conſcience told him, that he had grievouſly ſinned againſt his Maſter; and this voice of conſcience was confirmed by that of the cock, which by his crowing put him in mind of his Maſter's words, namely, 'This night, before the cock crow 'twice, thou ſhalt deny me thrice (*k*).' Hence we may draw the following inferences.

(*k*) Mark xiv. 30.

1. The Spirit of God calls ſins by quite another name, than what depraved reaſon gives them. Peter probably thought thus with himſelf; What right has this maid-ſervant to aſk me, whether I am a diſciple of Jeſus, or belong to his followers? As ſhe has no authority to queſtion me, I am not obliged to tell her the truth. I have ſaid nothing ſcandalous, or that tends to defame my Maſter; and what ſervice would it do him, if I ſhould bring myſelf in danger of my life? As my confeſſion can do him no manner of good, he will not take it ill, that I pretend I do not know him. Thus he little thought that he was guilty of the ſin of denying Jeſus Chriſt before men. But the Holy Spirit plainly ſays, 'He denied him before "all.' This denial is placed in oppoſition to confeſſing Chriſt and his religion, and conſequently is a heinous ſin. For the Son of God has poſitively ſaid, 'Whoſoever confeſſes me 'before men, him will I confeſs before my Fa-'ther who is in heaven: But whoſoever ſhall 'deny me before men, him will I deny before my 'Father who is in heaven (*l*). And indeed, Peter here committed a ſin of a very deep dye. He not only told a manifeſt falſity againſt his knowledge and conſcience, but, in time of diſtreſs, 'he made lies his refuge (*m*);' whereas he ſhould have relied on the protection of God, and the ſafe-conduct given him by our bleſſed Lord. He broke his promiſe, *viz.* 'though I ſhould die

(*l*) Matth. x. 32, 33. (*m*) Iſa. xxviii. 15.

with

with thee, yet will I not deny thee (*n*).' He is aſhamed of him, whom he had publicly acknowledged to be the Son of God; offends his neighbour; ſtrengthens the enemies of Chriſt in their wickedneſs; and, by his puſillanimity and baſeneſs, renders Satan bolder and more importunate in his temptation. However he might extenuate this crime, and excuſe this precipitate raſhneſs in himſelf, the Spirit of God calls the action by its real name. Peter's lie was of ſuch a nature, that though it ſaved his life without hurting any one, yet we do not hear that the Holy Ghoſt excuſes it, as a lie of neceſſity, but brands it as an infamous denial of Chriſt.

2. He that has not yet denied his immoderate love of life, is in danger, on the firſt trial, of denying his Lord and Saviour. One of theſe two things we muſt chooſe: Either our life muſt be renounced when Chriſt requires it (*o*), or we ſhall be apt to deny Chriſt on any exigency. For when any danger occurs for the ſake of the Word, either of exile, impriſonment, or death, if our life be dearer to us than Chriſt and his religion, and we are not ready and willing to offer it up to him, who has given his life a ſacrifice for us, we pave the way for denying Chriſt and his ſacred truths. Therefore we are not to think thoſe words of Chriſt hard ſaying, 'If any man come to me, and 'hate not his own life, he cannot be my diſ-'ciple (*p*). This injunction of our bleſſed Lord is rather to be accounted a preſervative againſt

(*n*) Matth. xxvi. 35. (*o*) Luke ix. 24. (*p*) Luke xiv. 26.

the ſin of final apoſtacy; and conſequently not a burden, but a kindneſs. It is ſufficient, that the Lord Jeſus is willing to give us ſtrength; it is ſufficient, that he has promiſed to give us a better and more durable exiſtence, in exchange for this wretched, precarious, and tranſitory Being; and to recompenſe the ſhort momentary ſufferings of this life, with an eternal weight of glory.

3. Peter's denial of Chriſt was a conſiderable aggravation of the ſufferings of our bleſſed Lord. Certainly it was not without deſign, that all the four Evangeliſts (though ſome are more circumſtantial in the account than the others) have inſerted this incident in the hiſtory of the Paſſion. Thus the Spirit of prophecy had before declared, that this would be a part of the Meſſiah's ſufferings, *viz.* that his lovers and friends ſhould ſtand a-loof from his ſore (*q*); that he was become a ſtranger unto his brethren, and an alien unto his mother's children (*r*). How did this baſe ingratitude and perfidy of Peter wound the faithful heart of the bleſſed Jeſus! How deeply muſt it have affected him, to ſee that the ſubtile fiend had now got the better of the moſt intrepid and eldeſt of the Apoſtles, and thought to gain an eaſy conqueſt over the reſt. Hence our bleſſed Saviour had particularly prayed for him, 'that 'his faith might not fail (*ſ*).' But we muſt conſider that all our inconſtancy and infidelity contributed to increaſe the ſufferings of Jeſus Chriſt. We, in the perſon of our firſt parents, entered into converſation with the enemy of

(*q*) Pſ. xxxviii. 11. (*r*) Pſ. lxix. 8. (*ſ*) Luke xxii. 32.

God,

God, as Peter here intrudes himſelf into the company of the enemies of Chriſt. We plunged ourſelves into danger, out of a fatal curioſity to taſte the forbidden fruit; as his curioſity of ſeeing what would be the event, drew him into the ſnare of temptation. As he denied Chriſt, ſo we denied the Lord our Creator, and, as it were, impiouſly ſaid, 'I know thee not; who 'is the Lord, that I ſhould obey his voice?' O how often have we behaved as ſtrangers to our Lord and Maſter, when owning ourſelves the ſervants of God might have drawn ſome inconvenience or danger on our heads. How much more prone are we, by the corruption of our nature, to deny God, rather than the world? All theſe crimes were to be expiated by our Redeemer; for which, praiſed be his holy name now and forevermore.

THE PRAYER.

O Moſt faithful Saviour! We praiſe thee for thy mercy, who in thy Word haſt given us examples, that may make us wiſe unto ſalvation. Preſerve us from all raſhneſs, ſinful curioſity, and preſumption, and all reliance on our own ſtrength; which pave the way to our fall from grace. Withdraw our hearts from an inordinate love of earthly things, and let us value nothing ſo much, as to be willing to forfeit thy favour to attain it. Make us, we beſeech thee, renounce that culpable love of our own life, which may induce to deny thy truths; and enable us rather

to lay down our lives than deny thee in the day of trouble, and conſequently be denied by thee before thy Father and his holy Angels. May we henceforth give thee real proofs of our fidelity and unſhaken conſtancy in all trials and temptations! Amen.

CONSIDERATION III.

CHRIST *interrogated the firſt time before the ſpiritual judicature.*

'(*a*) THE High Prieſt then aſked Jeſus of 'his diſciples, and of his doctrine. 'Jeſus anſwered him, I ſpake openly to the 'world; I ever taught in the ſynagogues, and in 'the temple, whither the Jews always reſort; 'and in ſecret have I ſaid nothing: Why aſkeſt 'thou me? Aſk them who heard me, what I 'ſaid unto them: Behold they know what I ſaid.'

Theſe words inform us how our bleſſed Lord was firſt interrogated before the ſpiritual court of the Jews. They exhibit

Firſt, The queſtion put by the High Prieſt.

Secondly, The anſwer Jeſus made to his queſtion.

I.

In the queſtion we are to conſider, *firſt*, the perſon that propoſes it, and, *ſecondly*, the purport of his queſtion.

Firſt, The perſon that propoſed this queſtion was Caiaphas the High Prieſt. A great aſſembly

(*a*) John xviii. 19, 20, 21.

con-

conſiſting of the chief Prieſts, and Elders of the people, had been convened at his houſe, in the night-time, in order to try Jeſus of Nazareth, who was now brought before them, and to paſs ſentence of death on him. But the High Prieſt was, as it were, the mouth of this auguſt aſſembly, and ſharpened the keen arrows which thoſe venerable hypocrites had forged in their iniquitous cabals. As it was the inſidious practice of our Lord's enemies, before this time, to put to him all kinds of enſnaring queſtions, in order to draw ſome unguarded expreſſion from his mouth, for which they might accuſe him; ſo this crafty method was obſerved in the firſt queſtion here put to Jeſus. It was indeed a duty incumbent on the High Prieſt, to keep a watchful eye on the purity of the doctrines taught in Iſrael, leſt any falſe prophet ſhould ariſe and draw the people to apoſtacy from the law of God, introduce pernicious errors, and diſturb the peace of the church. But in this enquiry, ſuch care for the purity of the doctrine Jeſus had taught is only a mere pretence, with which theſe blood-thirſty judges palliate their cruelty. This was therefore an hypocritical queſtion, in which the love of truth had not the leaſt ſhare; for it proceeded from inveterate malice, and a wicked intention. It had long ſince been determined to deſtroy Jeſus, however innocent, as the only expedient, in the opinion of Caiaphas, for quieting the Jewiſh church, now diſturbed by his new doctrine. Here this impious Pontiff erects the firſt Inquiſition, and endeavours by

inſidious queſtions of various kinds to get ſomething from our Saviour's mouth, on account of which he might pronounce ſentence of death upon him with ſome appearance of juſtice. He would not venture at once to accuſe a perſon who was perfectly innocent; but firſt, by examining him, thought to procure matter to form a charge upon. Thus he ſhewed an equal mixture of craftineſs and malice in this proceeding. This is the perſon who propoſed the queſtion

Secondly, The purport of this queſtion is thus related: 'The High Prieſt then aſked Jeſus concerning his diſciples, and his doctrine.' Our bleſſed Saviour had been brought hither in the night with ſwords and ſtaves, as a murderer. Hence it might be naturally concluded, that at his examination, the firſt queſtion propoſed to him would have been, What haſt thou done? But Caiaphas's own conſcience ſufficiently convinced him, that Jeſus had done no evil, and that by this queſtion he ſhould have come ſhort of his wicked aim. For our bleſſed Saviour was known all over Judea to be a public benefactor; ſo that Caiaphas himſelf muſt have bluſhed, had he charged him with any thing that was criminal. He likewiſe thought that it would be more agreeable to his high office in the Jewiſh church, to queſtion the priſoner concerning his diſciples, and his doctrine. He therefore firſt enquires concerning his diſciples; and would induce our bleſſed Lord to diſcover the names of his followers and adherents, and to give an account why he procured ſuch a retinue

tinue to himſelf? by what authority he had made choice of Twelve Apoſtles, and ſeventy other diſciples, excluſive of the former; and to go about the country with theſe, and draw after him ſuch a number of the common people, and lead them by thouſands into the wilderneſs? Theſe were things which directly tended to create a tumult and rebellion. At the ſame time, this queſtion ſeems to carry with it a tacit reproach, that his diſciples were no ſooner well informed of the badneſs of their Maſter's cauſe, than they forſook him and fled.

The High Prieſt farther aſked our Saviour concerning his doctrine, What the ſubſtance and deſign of it was? and whether it agreed with the law of Moſes, and the traditions of the Elders? or whether it was contrary to either of theſe, or different from them? As the drift of the firſt queſtion, concerning his diſciples, was to accuſe our Saviour of ſeditious practices, namely, that he went about ſetting himſelf up for a king, and by gaining to himſelf a numerous party, to eſtabliſh himſelf in the dignity he had aſſumed; ſo the other queſtion, relating to his doctrine, aimed at convicting him of hereſy, as having deceived the people, and ſeduced them to depart from the law of Moſes. Now, as Jeſus promulgated his doctrines on mountains and in deſarts, he invalidated the traditions of the Jewiſh fathers; and as he explained the law of Moſes in a new and unuſual manner, it was quite evident to the prieſts that he muſt be a ſeducer and a heretic. Thus the

High Prieſt thought, that if he could with any probability convict Jeſus of thoſe two crimes, he ſhould bring the affair to a ſpeedy iſſue. To be convicted of hereſy, and departing from the law of Moſes, was alone ſufficient for condemning him to death in the ſpiritual court; and the charge of ſedition was calculated, to induce the civil power the more readily to put the ſentence of death, paſſed on him by the eccleſiaſtical court, in execution. Such was the addreſs and cunning of the High Prieſt in aſking this queſtion. But, before we proceed to the anſwer which our bleſſed Lord made him, we ſhall make the following obſervations on this head.

1. The greateſt injuſtice is practiſed in the world under the appearance of juſtice. Nothing could be more iniquitous than the whole proceſs carried on againſt our bleſſed Saviour. The concluſion of this villainous plot was anſwerable to the beginning of it. The reſolution had been taken long before, that Jeſus ſhould die. In the next place, it was contrived how they might, by captious and enſnaring queſtions, extort a confeſſion from him, which might be deemed by them a crime worthy of death. However, this flagrant injuſtice was carried on under the appearance of equity. An examination was begun, and enquiry was made into the nature of Chriſt's doctrine: After this, witneſſes were heard; all this, however, was a mere outſide ſhow, and vile deceit. This flagrant injuſtice the Son of God ſubmitted to, in order to expiate for the innumerable kinds of injuſtice which are, by wicked men, var-

niſhed

niſhed over with the appearance of equity. How many thouſand wicked ſchemes are carried into execution under a plauſible appearance? How often, for inſtance, among learned men, is a pretended zeal for the honour of God and purity of doctrine made the pretence, under which a faithful ſervant of God is moleſted and injured? How often, among men in power, is the pretence of doing juſtice made a covering for committing violence, and all kinds of injuſtice? How often, in private life, are iniquitous deſigns carried on againſt another man's property, under the appearance of having a right to it, till he is ruined by tedious law-ſuits? Therefore, as the Son of God was obliged to ſuffer under the appearance of juſtice, it ſhould inſpire us with a juſt abhorrence for all indirect proceedings, all hypocriſy, diſſimulation, and ſecret artifices, that we may never more ſtain our conſciences with ſuch iniquities: But if they have been already polluted with ſuch wicked practices, let us waſh and cleanſe ourſelves from them in the pure blood of the immaculate Lamb of God.

2. Theſe inſidious queſtions, which the Son of God permitted to be put to him, ſhould extinguiſh in us a fondneſs for unneceſſary queſtions in the examination of divine truths. It was not without deſign, that Chriſt our only Mediator permitted theſe crafty queſtions of his enemies to be put to him; this is a part of his ſufferings which muſt have ſenſibly affected him: By this he has atoned for all unneceſſary queſtions

queſtions to which we are often prompted by an impertinent curioſity, eſpecially in divine things; and great numbers, particularly among the learned, are too fond of queſtions and ſtrifes of words, which tend to no manner of edification (*b*). How often do we ſummon Chriſt and his Almighty Father before our arrogant and preſumptuous reaſon, and require an account of his wiſe decrees and adorable proceedings? This our ſinful curioſity, our bleſſed Lord has atoned for in the inſtance before us. At the ſame time, he has thereby ſanctified the ſufferings of his faithful ſervants, who often, in times of perſecution, are enſnared with inſidious queſtions; and in this iniquitous practice the Popiſh Inquiſitors, to their eternal infamy, are known particularly to excel.

How often was it ſeen during the heathen and antichriſtian perſecutions, that a faithful Miniſter of the Goſpel, after being apprehended, was put to the torture, in order to get from him the names of his diſciples and hearers, that they likewiſe might be apprehended? How often were private Chriſtians tormented and harraſſed in the moſt barbarous and cruel manner, that they might diſcover their heretical acquaintance; though the greateſt part of them choſe to endure any pain or torture, rather than be guilty of ſuch a treachery? This infamous practice their ſucceſſors, the inhuman Inquiſitors, carefully imitate. Thus has the ſon of God, by being judicially queſtioned concerning his diſ-

(*b*) Tim. vi. 4.

ciples,

ciples, alſo ſanctified this kind of ſuffering and cruel treatment.

3. It is not unuſual for the beſt deſigns, and moſt laudable actions, of the ſervants of God to be unjuſtly ſuſpected by the world. Chriſt in chooſing his diſciples had the moſt beneficent views, and the doctrine which he taught was nothing leſs than a declaration of the counſel of God concerning our eternal ſalvation: Nevertheleſs, he permitted both the choice of his diſciples, and the purity of his heavenly doctrine, to be loaded with an unjuſt ſuſpicion. His appointing diſciples was looked upon as having a tendency to tumult and rebellion; and his pure and ſalutary doctrine fell under the ſuſpicion of being infected with the poiſon of hereſy. By this kind of ſuffering he was to atone for our depravity, in being ſo ready to put the worſt conſtruction on the deſigns, words, and actions of our neighbour, and to impute to him ſuch wicked intentions as never entered into his thoughts. Nor is this all: We are impious enough to entertain unworthy thoughts of the views, ways, deſigns, and diſpenſations of God himſelf, and to arraign his wiſdom and juſtice. Our bleſſed Lord has alſo, by this part of his ſufferings, ſanctified the ſufferings of his ſervants when they are oppreſſed with falſe and undeſerved ſuſpicions, and when their moſt innocent views and laudable deſigns are branded with the worſt conſtructions. Therefore when a Chriſtian, in following Jeſus Chriſt, meets with the like ill-treatment, let him commune with

his

his own heart, and ſay to himſelf: "Was my "Saviour no better treated? did he ſee his di- "vine proceedings attended with vile ſuſpicions? "What am I, that I ſhould be better treated "than my Lord and Maſter?" This conſideration ſhould induce us to abſtain from ill ſuſpicions, and by no means to indulge it, ſo far as to moleſt the true and faithful ſervants of God; ſince by ſuch practices we commit thoſe ſins againſt his members, which the High Prieſt and Sanhedrim at Jeruſalem were guilty of towards the perſon of Chriſt.

II.

As to our bleſſed Lord's anſwer to the foregoing queſtion; it is related in the 20th and 21ſt verſes (*c*). However malicious and enſnaring the High Prieſt's queſtion was, yet our bleſſed Saviour anſwered it; teaching us by this behaviour, that we ſhould be always ready to give an anſwer to thoſe who aſk a reaſon for our proceedings (*d*), even though, in ſo doing, they may have ill-deſigns. Our bleſſed Lord would alſo particularly ſhew by his great example, that the ſervants of God, when endeavours are uſed to render their doctrines liable to be ſuſpected of having a pernicious tendency, are abſolutely obliged, with all proper freedom, to vindicate them againſt ſuch unjuſt ſuſpicions.

As to the purport of the anſwer itſelf; it is remarkable that our bleſſed Lord paſſes over in ſilence the firſt part of the queſtion, which con-

(*c*) John xviii. (*d*) 1 Peter iii. 15.

cerned

cerned his diſciples; and this he probably did for the following reaſons.

1. Becauſe in this point the Scripture itſelf ſpoke for him. For as he had hitherto ſufficiently demonſtrated to the Jews that he was the true Meſſiah, it was neceſſary that he ſhould have diſciples; the Meſſiah being introduced by the Prophet ſpeaking in this manner: 'Bind up the teſtimony; ſeal the law among 'my diſciples. And I will wait upon the 'Lord that hideth his face from the houſe of 'Jacob, and I will look for him (*e*).' Now that theſe were the words of the Meſſiah was allowed by the Jews even in our Saviour's time, as appears from the Epiſtle to the Hebrews (*f*).

2. Becauſe his diſciples were then but weak inſtruments, and unexperienced ſoldiers. Judas had betrayed him; Peter began to deny him; and all the reſt had forſaken him and fled. As they had ſhewed much weakneſs when their Maſter was with them, theſe artful judges would have made a handle of that againſt Chriſt, and imputed to him whatever ſhould be done amiſs by his irreſolute diſciples. The faithful ſervants of God are now frequently treated in the ſame manner; the world crying out againſt them at every miſbehaviour of any of their hearers. But Jeſus, by his ſilence, eludes this artifice.

3. Becauſe this point is anſwered in our Saviour's defence of his doctrine: for the only

(*e*) Iſai. viii. 16, 17.

(*f*) Chap. ii. 13. 'Behold I, and the children, or diſciples, 'which God hath given me.'

view

view he had in appointing diſciples was to aſſiſt him in the promulgation of his doctrine. Therefore, by proving that no ſuſpicion of hereſy or ſedition could be charged on his doctrine, he at the ſame time proved that by chooſing diſciples, he had no deſign of raiſing a tumult or rebellion.

4. Becauſe this great council, after the aſcenſion of Chriſt, was to receive a full anſwer to this part of the queſtion. The diſciples of the bleſſed Jeſus, by the bold teſtimony they bore every where to the truth of the reſurrection of Chriſt, cauſed theſe judges an infinite deal of trouble and vexation (*g*).

As to the ſecond part of this queſtion, which related to his doctrine, Jeſus returned a more direct anſwer. In this we may obſerve, *firſt*, a declaration of his manner of preaching; *ſecondly*, a remonſtrance to the High Prieſt.

In the account of his preaching, Jeſus informs the High Prieſt in what manner, and where he taught, in theſe words: 'I ſpake 'openly to the world;' or, as he ſays in another place (*h*) 'I ſpake to, or before, the 'world * what I have heard of the Father.' By this anſwer he gives them to underſtand, that with great freedom he had declared the truth to all ſorts of men who were willing to hear it; and this is no more than what his own enemies were ready to acknowledge, when they ſaid to him: 'Maſter, we know that thou art

(*g*) Acts ii. iii. iv. v, (*h*) John viii. 26.

* λεγω εις τον κοσμον.

'true,

'true, and teacheſt the way of God in truth; 'neither careſt thou for any man, for thou re-'gardeſt not the perſon of men (*i*).' He did not preach one ſet of doctrines among his friends, and another quite oppoſite to it, when he obſerved any ſpies or informers had mingled with the croud. On the contrary, he uniformly adhered to the truth, and declared it indiſcriminately to the conſciences of all men, before audiences of every kind; for he often had ſhewn the way of ſalvation, ſometimes in allegories and parables, and ſometimes in plainer terms, to many thouſands who were come together to hear the word of God from him.

Our bleſſed Lord farther mentions the places where he taught, namely, in the ſynagogues, and in the temple, whither the Jews from all parts uſually reſorted. Thus he makes uſe of thoſe public places in which, at thoſe times, God's word was read and explained. When he was at Jeruſalem, he uſed to go into the temple, where, in the court of the congregation of Iſrael, were ſeveral porticoes, or cloiſters, in which the people were inſtructed in the law. When he was at other places he uſually went into the public ſynagogues or ſchools, in which a ſtranger was allowed to teach the people who were preſent; for in the beginning of our Saviour's miniſtry, we are told, that 'Jeſus 'went through all Galilee about all the cities and 'villages, teaching in their ſynagogues, and 'preaching the Goſpel of the kingdom (*k*).'

(*i*) Matt. xxii. 16. (*k*) Matt. iv. 23. ix. 35.

In ſuch places of public reſort did Jeſus teach. Nor did he go thither only to exclaim againſt the prevailing vices of the age, to cenſure the wicked teachers of the people, and to expoſe their hypocriſy; but to declare the truths of his kingdom, and to apply to the hearts of men the word of faith in him, and repentance towards God.

Our bleſſed Lord alſo farther adds, 'And in 'ſecret have I ſaid nothing.' Here it may be objected, Did not Chriſt often preach in the deſert, on mountains, and even in private houſes? It is true, he did; but never in a clandeſtine, timorous, and ſuſpicious manner. Every one was at liberty to come and hear what was ſaid; nor were ſpies and informers, who are always at hand, debarred of acceſs. And when he ſometimes diſcourſed privately with his diſciples, or with other perſons, as Nicodemus (*l*), it was on no other ſubject, but what he publickly taught, and inculcated. Some things were more clearly explained to his diſciples, that they, in proper time, might communicate them to others; as in Mark (*m*) 'And when he was alone, 'they that were about him, with the Twelve, 'aſked him of the parable. And he ſaid unto 'them, Unto you it is given to know the myſ-'teries of the kingdom of God: but unto them 'that are without, all theſe things are done in 'parables.' But this was, at the ſame time, his expreſs injunction to his diſciples (*n*), 'What

(*l*) John iii. (*m*) Chap. iv. 10, 11. (*n*) Matt. x. 27.

'I tell

'I tell you in darkneſs, that ſpeak ye in light; 'and what you hear in the ear, that preach 'ye upon the houſe tops'.

Our bleſſed Saviour's deſign in teaching publickly was to avoid the ſuſpicion either of ſedition or hereſy. Thoſe who have any deſigns againſt the public tranquillity generally ſeek by-places, and clandeſtinely confer with their adherents, in order to concert the ſafeſt meaſures to execute their wicked purpoſes. Falſe prophets likewiſe affect privacy, for which practice they had very good reaſon at that time; ſuch perſons among the Jews being puniſhed with death. But our bleſſed Lord affirms before the whole council of the chief Prieſts and Elders, that he had openly ſpoke what he accounted conducive to the happineſs, and neceſſary for the ſalvation, of mankind.

Thus the Meſſiah is before repreſented to us in the Old Teſtament, under the character of Heavenly Wiſdom, as one who would ſpeak openly, 'Wiſdom crieth without; ſhe uttereth 'her voice in the ſtreet. She crieth in the chief 'places of concourſe, in the opening of the 'gates; in the city ſhe uttereth her words (*o*).' The Meſſiah, according to the Prophet, ſaith: 'I have not ſpoken in ſecret, in a dark place of 'the earth:—— I the Lord ſpeak righteouſ-'neſs; I declare things that are right (*p*).' We ſee how the Meſſiah, many ages before, had obviated the ſuſpicion with which he was to be branded in his ſufferings; namely, that

(*o*) Prov. i. 20, 21. (*p*) Iſa. xlv. 19.

he was a ſecret promoter of all kinds of pernicious doctrines. This is the firſt part of our Saviour's anſwer, containing a declaration of his manner of preaching.

The ſecond part conſiſts of a remonſtrance to the High Prieſt; in which our Lord cenſures his method of proceeding with a becoming freedom, and propoſes a better method for coming at the truth.

He cenſures his method of proceeding in theſe words 'Why aſkeſt thou me?' As if he had ſaid, You do not uſe the proper means to come at the truth. Can the perſon accuſed bear witneſs in his own cauſe? For if I was to give you a detail of my doctrine, and lay open to you the whole ſyſtem, ſo that you yourſelf could not make any juſt exceptions againſt it; yet you would readily palliate your iniquitous cauſe with ſuch an evaſion as this: "Now he prevaricates and diſſembles, in order "to avoid the danger that threatens him. He "dares not, in our preſence, avow his heretical "opinions, and deteſtable blaſphemies; but "when he is among the poor ignorant popu-"lace, he imperceptibly infuſes into them the "ſecret poiſon of his pernicious doctrines." Thus our bleſſed Saviour by this queſtion would give his judges to underſtand, that this manner of enquiring after truth was neither juſt nor legal.

On the contrary, he propoſes a better method to come at the truth by adding, 'Aſk 'them who heard me, what I ſaid unto them:

'Behold,

'Behold, they know what I ſaid.' Theſe words are a manifeſt teſtimony of the juſtice of Chriſt's cauſe: This was not the anſwer of a poor, diſpirited, and affrighted criminal; but of a perſon of wiſdom and underſtanding, of integrity and reſolution. This divine Teacher had no reaſon to make any difficulty of appealing to the conſciences of his hearers; nay, he is not affraid that his cauſe ſhould be tried by his very enemies. Poſſibly, the very officers who had been ſent to apprehend Jeſus, but returned without him, ſaying, 'Never man ſpake like 'this man (*q*),' might be then ſtanding before the door of the great hall. Theſe, and ſuch other witneſſes, ſhould have been heard; and then the truth would have probably come to light. Beſides, this was the method of proceeding in ſuch caſes, appointed by the Jewiſh law, that witneſſes ſhould be confronted with the perſon accuſed, and that in the mouth of two or three witneſſes, every truth ſhould be eſtabliſhed. Therefore, the High Prieſt is juſtly reproved by the Lord Jeſus, for neglecting this preſcribed method of proceeding in judicial caſes. This may ſuffice for clearing up the ſenſe of our Saviour's anſwer.

Some important doctrines may be learned from the freedom with which this anſwer was given, and alſo from the ſubſtance of the anſwer itſelf. From the former, we may learn the following truths.

1. A faithful ſervant of God ought to face the

(*q*) John vii. 46.

enemies of truth, with a becoming firmneſs and reſolution. Chriſt has not only gone before us as an illuſtrious example; but has alſo obtained for us the ſtrength required to imitate him in this particular. Otherwiſe a ſervant of God, in ſuch circumſtances, might be eaſily diſcouraged by the conſideration of his own weakneſs, and the power of his enemies; but Chriſt, who with his ſpotleſs innocence covers the failings of his ſervants, has acquired for them power from on high, to preſent themſelves undaunted in the midſt of their enemies, and boldly to open their mouths in declaring the truth.

2. An undaunted freedom and reſolution, in facing the diſguiſed enemies of truth, is entirely reconcilable to humility and diſcretion. This diſcourſe of our bleſſed Lord was certainly ſeaſoned with the ſalt of holineſs; and flowed from a laudable zeal for the honour of his prophetic office, which was now unjuſtly branded with the ſuſpicion of hereſy. Such an undaunted anſwer the High Prieſt little expected from a perſon, who ſtood bound before him as a priſoner, and whom they had already pre-judged. But it was fit this haughty Pontif ſhould know, that he had to do with a perſon of tranſcendent dignity and excellence. The followers of Jeſus Chriſt ſhould exert this holy confidence on ſuch occaſions; and though the world, in ſuch caſes, is extremely captious, and cannot bear any thing of this freedom in Chriſtians, (as our Saviour was ſtruck on the face, for freely vindicating his innocence;) yet their Mediator has obtained for them this

this freedom, and they are not in the leaſt culpable when they make uſe of it, within the limits of diſcretion and decency.

3. A good conſcience is the only ſource of true freedom, and undaunted reſolution. Of this we have here a plain inſtance in our bleſſed Lord. As he was not conſcious of any hereſy, or ſeditious deſigns, he might with a becoming freedom and boldneſs repel ſuch an aſperſion. Therefore, whoever will imitate Chriſt in this particular, muſt have a pure and unſpotted conſcience. The men of this world alſo will often ſhew themſelves bold and reſolute, and in their wicked tranſactions will put on the maſk of freedom and confidence, which, at the bottom, is nothing but a carnal preſumption; nor does it laſt any longer, than while an evil conſcience is laid aſleep, and ceaſes to perform its office. But when the conſcience is once awakened by the voice of God, and preſents the ſinner with a black catalogue of his moſt ſecret wickedneſs, and private villainies; then he is appalled, and all his affected boldneſs and intrepidity vaniſh away. None but the children of God, whoſe conſciences are appeaſed by the blood of the Lamb, have a true confidence and undaunted firmneſs; which even the children of this world cannot forbear ſecretly admiring, though they are ſtrangers to the cauſe from whence they flow. Have we cauſe therefore to behave with freedom and boldneſs? Is this foundation laid in us? Or do our conſciences reproach us with ſome heinous ſin, which we would by no means have others come to the

knowledge of, as it would expoſe us to ſhame and confuſion? We have then reaſon to be timorous and dejected. If the latter be our caſe, let us amend our lives, and haſten to the fountain, which was freely opened for ſin and uncleanneſs; namely, to the blood of the Son of God, which is the only balm to quiet an evil conſcience.

Thoſe perſons who propoſe to be one day public preachers in the Church of Chriſt, ought to be more particularly careful in their younger years to beware of all ſinful and reprehenſible behaviour, and carefully to maintain a conſcience void of offence. For how ſhould they, in the courſe of their future miniſtry, ſhew that undaunted courage? how can they expreſs a noble zeal and becoming freedom in reproving the wicked? if their own conſciences be wounded, and reproach them, and ſay to every one that has ill-treated this monitor in his boſom, "Thou "thyſelf wert formerly no better, thou haſt "even committed thoſe ſins which thou at pre-"ſent inveigheſt againſt; nor haſt thou yet come "to any account with thy Creator, nor ſup-"plicated for the remiſſion of the ſins of thy "youth by the blood of Chriſt." Therefore it behoves every one who is intended for the miniſtry, to be no leſs diligent in preſerving a pure and unſullied conſcience, than in acquiring knowledge in his holy profeſſion. Let every one preſerve his conſcience unhurt, as he would the apple of his eye. For as we treat this divine Gueſt within us, ſo will it alſo treat us. If we ſhew

no

no regard to our conſcience, and wound it time after time; it will take an opportunity of revenging itſelf, and will fill us with terrifying reflections, and painful remorſe: But if we endeavour to purify it in the blood of Chriſt, and afterwards give it up to the inſpection and guidance of God's Holy Spirit; it will befriend us through life, and comfort us at the awful hour of death, and the tremendous day of judgment.

From the purport of the anſwer itſelf, which our bleſſed Lord made the High Prieſt, we may draw the following inferences.

1. A true Chriſtian ought to avoid all appearance of evil. This maxim, which St. Paul lays down (*r*), the Son of God has himſelf practiſed, and illuſtrated by his example, and has, at the ſame time, imparted ſtrength for his followers to walk unblameable in his bleſſed footſteps. They ſhould therefore uſe all diligence to walk cautiouſly, and without offence, amidſt a ſinful generation; to conſider that many eyes are intent on their words and actions; and that the world gladly lays hold on every opportunity of calumniating and reviling them. They ought therefore to be watchful, not only to avoid all evil, but the appearance of it. But if, notwithſtanding all their caution, their moſt innocent words and actions are ſcandalouſly miſrepreſented by the world, let them comfort themſelves by the example of Jeſus Chriſt, who was traduced without a cauſe: Let them wrap themſelves up in their own integrity, and recommend their cauſe to God.

(*r*) 1 Theſſ. v. 22.

2. The

2. As the doctrines of Chriſt were openly promulgated, ſo are they to be openly and chearfully profeſſed. St. Paul, in the name of all Chriſtians, ſays: 'We are the children of the 'light and of the day (*f*).' Therefore, inſtead of being aſhamed of Chriſt's religion, we are to own it in the face of all the world; for it contains nothing contrary to the principles of ſound reaſon, nothing which claſhes with the ideas we have of God and his attributes. Whoever therefore is aſhamed of the Chriſtian doctrine; nay, whoever does not in heart and mouth profeſs it; as it were, reproaches Chriſt, and brings on him an unworthy ſuſpicion, like the falſe accuſation of the Jewiſh Sanhedrim; namely, that he went about clandeſtinely, propagating ſuch doctrines as could not bear the light. Indeed, when no public perſecutions are on foot, it is an eaſy matter to profeſs the faith of Chriſt without fear or reſerve; but at a time when the profeſſion of Chriſtianity expoſes a man to the moſt cruel torments, it requires more courage and fortitude than can be derived from mere nature and reaſon. Our bleſſed Saviour, by his holy firmneſs and intrepidity, acquired that gift for his flock; and therefore, we muſt humbly intreat him, ſo to convince our hearts of the truth of his heavenly doctrines, that we may not heſitate to make an unreſerved profeſſion of his religion; and, as it becomes the children of light and of the day, to lay down our lives for his ſake.

Whoever therefore is conſcious that he is ſtill a child of darkneſs, and hateth the light; that

(*f*) 1 Theſſ. v. 5.

he is ſtill engaged in clandeſtine ſchemes, and flagitious crimes, that ſhun the light; let him earneſtly deſire to be delivered from the power of the prince of darkneſs, and repair to Chriſt, the light of the world, who publicly taught in the face of day, and openly performed the work which his Father had given him to do. His merciful Redeemer will deliver him from all the bonds of darkneſs, from all ſecret fear of ſhame; and will enable him to walk undaunted with a conſcience void of offence towards God and man.

On the other hand, whoever has hitherto endeavoured to avoid every appearance of evil; and not only forbears all outward behaviour that might injure his good name, but walks uprightly before God, with a pure conſcience; ſuch a one may follow the example of Chriſt with the more confidence: ſo that if his words and actions are miſconſtrued, he can ſay with his Lord and Saviour, I have ſpoken and acted openly in the face of the world; I have no ſiniſter deſigns to carry on; I am conſcious of no wicked artifice, or evil intentions. The Omniſcient God is the Judge of my ſecret thoughts; he knows that the thoughts and intents of my heart are ſincere and upright before him. Thus ſhall a good Chriſtian daily acquire greater boldneſs to look the enemies of Chriſt in the face, and nobly to deſpiſe their groundleſs ſuſpicions, and malicious calumnies; for if he is abſolved by his own conſcience, he is well aſſured that, in the day of the Lord Jeſus, his innocence will be made manifeſt in the preſence of Angels and the whole race of mankind.

THE

THE PRAYER.

O Faithful and ever-living Saviour! bleſſed be thy holy name, for the grace which thou haſt been pleaſed to grant me at this hour, for the conſideration of thy ſacred word. Oh, that thou wouldeſt write in our hearts all the wholeſome doctrines which we have now heard; and powerfully remind us of them, on every occaſion that may require ſuch incentives to virtue. Bring to the light of thy Goſpel thoſe who are fatally given to hypocriſy, deceit, and the works of darkneſs: Diſcover to them the depravity of their hearts, impreſs on their minds an ingenuous and ſalutary ſhame of their evil doings; and renew them to ſalvation, that they may henceforth walk before thee in real innocence and uprightneſs of heart. Make every one of us ſtrictly careful to preſerve a good conſcience, as the ſource of all true courage and confidence, that we may be comforted amidſt all the groundleſs ſuſpicions and falſe accuſations, with which the world is ready to load us. Amen.

CONSIDERATION IV.

The unjuſt treatment of CHRIST *at his firſt examination before the* Spiritual Court.

'(a) AND when Jeſus had thus ſpoken, 'one of the Officers, who ſtood by, 'ſtruck Jeſus with the palm of his hand, ſay-

(a) John xviii. 22, 23, 24.

'ing,

'ing, Anſwereſt thou the High Prieſt ſo? Jeſus 'anſwered him, If I have ſpoken evil, bear 'witneſs of the evil; but if well, why ſmiteſt 'thou me? (Now Annas had ſent him bound to 'Caiaphas the High Prieſt.')

Theſe words exhibit to us the unjuſt treatment of our bleſſed Saviour at his firſt hearing; and of this we have two inſtances in the words before us.

I.

In the firſt inſtance, we may obſerve, 1. Wherein this ill-treatment conſiſted, 2. The plea that was urged for it, and 3. Our Saviour's behaviour on this occaſion.

1. It is ſaid, 'When Jeſus had thus ſpoken, 'one of the Officers, who ſtood by, ſtruck Jeſus 'with the palm of his hand.'

The perſon, who thus injured our bleſſed Lord, was one of the Officers who ſtood by, one of the officers belonging to the Sanhedrim, who, after apprehending Chriſt in the Garden, had brought him to the High Prieſt's palace; but now ſtood cloſe by him, watching him, leſt he ſhould break the cords with which he was bound, and make his eſcape. This officer was ſo provoked and enraged at the boldneſs of our bleſſed Saviour's anſwer, in the preſence of the whole aſſembly of the ſupreme Council, that he inſolently offered this injury to the ſacred Perſon of Chriſt. But it is not lawful for the Officers, belonging to a court of judicature, in the leaſt to anticipate the judge, during the trial of a priſoner. This miſcreant, however, well knew that, on this occaſion,

ſion, he might preſume thus far; and that inſtead of being puniſhed, or even reproved, he would rather be commended and rewarded for this inſult to the priſoner. Poſſibly, the High Prieſt himſelf made a ſign to him to ſtrike our bleſſed Lord; as Ananias, another High Prieſt, expreſly ordered St. Paul to be ſtruck on the face, for anſwering him with the ſame undaunted freedom (*b*). Some are of opinion, that this Officer was Malchus, whoſe ear our Saviour had healed, after it had been cut off by Peter. If this be true, the inſult received an additional guilt from the ingratitude of this Officer.

The inſult done to our bleſſed Saviour was a blow on the face, by St. John called ῥαπισμα, *i. e.* a ſtroke given with the palm of the hand on the cheek *. This was both painful, eſpecially as it may be ſuppoſed to have come from an armed hand, and likewiſe contumelious; though the abuſe exceeded the pain. Of all the ill-treatment which Job received from his friends, he accounts this the moſt ſenſible indignity, when he complains, 'They have ſmitten me on the 'cheek reproachfully (*c*).' Whoever ſtruck an Iſraelite with his fiſt was obliged to pay a ſhekel, as a fine for the affront; but ſtriking him on the face was liable to a much greater mulct; ſuch a blow being accounted more reproachful, and contemptuous, than any other injury of that kind.

But the indignity was the more heinous in this inſtance, if we conſider, that this Officer was

(*b*) Acts xxiii. 2.

* Ῥαπιζω is uſed in this ſenſe in Matt. v. 39; but ῥαπισμα properly ſignifies a blow with a ſtick or a rod. *W.*

(*c*) Chap. xvi. 10.

one

one of the devil's meaneſt inſtruments; that the perſon ſtruck was the only begotten Son of God, the Lord of Glory, whoſe face, but a little before, ſhone like the Sun on Mount Tabor, and, before whom the Angels themſelves veil their faces; and that this affront was offered to Chriſt in the preſence of the High Prieſt, and all the Judges of the Sanhedrim, who repreſented the whole people of the Jews. Therefore, as the Head and Chiefs of the Jewiſh nation countenanced this illegal blow, and approved of it by ſilence; it was the ſame thing as if the Son of God, the Judge of Iſrael, had been ſtruck on the cheek by the whole Jewiſh people. But as the wretch who offered this injury, together with the Heads of the Jewiſh nation, were inſtigated to this villainy by the prince of darkneſs; it was as if the Son of God had received the blow on the cheek from Satan himſelf, who probably thought, by this unexpected ſtroke, to ruffle the temper of our ſuffering Mediator, and to abaſh and confound him. This indignity, which the Lord of Glory ſuffered, was exceedingly aggravated by all theſe circumſtances.

But we are not authorized by this, to rail and inveigh againſt, to curſe and execrate that perſon who offered this indignity to our bleſſed Lord; but to conſider, that our manifold ſins and impieties alſo had a hand in it. For our ſins were the cauſe of all the contumely, diſgrace, and pain, which the bleſſed Jeſus underwent; and conſequently they muſt have contributed to this injurious treatment. Hence we ſhould,

Firſt,

Firſt, Be convinced of the greatneſs, and deteſtable nature of Sin. By the fall of our firſt parents, we had delivered ourſelves up to Satan, into the moſt infamous ſlavery, and given the moſt ſcandalous luſts free dominion over us. Now, as Chriſt was to expiate our ſins, and make ſatisfaction for them to the Divine Juſtice, behold, the bleſſed Jeſus is to ſuffer himſelf to be given up to the brutiſh treatment of the moſt impious ſlaves, and to be reviled and injured by them with impunity; every one being allowed to uſe him with the moſt inſupportable inſolence and barbarity. We ſhould never have imagined, that ſin is ſo deteſtable a thing, were we not convinced of it by the ſufferings of the Son of God.

Secondly, Beſides the heinouſneſs of our ſins, we ſhould hence learn the greatneſs of the love which Jeſus Chriſt bears to mankind, who ſo willingly ſubmitted to all kinds of injuries and affronts, to redeem our loſt ſouls, to deliver us from the ignominious bondage, and to ſave us from that infamy and diſgrace, and thoſe ever-during ſufferings, which otherwiſe would have been our lot. As in every deliberate ſin, we, as it were, lift up our ſacrilegious hands againſt God, it would have covered our faces with confuſion, at his awful Tribunal; and we ſhould have been delivered up to be beaten with many ſtripes by Satan and his reprobate angels to all eternity, had not the Son of the Father, the Angel of his Preſence, whoſe eyes ſparkle with the love and benevolence of the Father

Father of Mercies, preſented himſelf in our ſtead, expoſed his cheeks to the ſmiters, and ſuffered himſelf to be ſtruck by the vileſt ſlaves. Oh, what unmeaſurable love was diſplayed in this unparalleled meekneſs and patience of the Lamb of God!

Let us expreſs our gratitude to our bleſſed Saviour, for his voluntary ſubmiſſion to this baſe indignity. Let us, when under the ſevereſt temptations, when the meſſenger of Satan buffets us, think on this impious blow which he ſuffered, and ſeek comfort in it. Let us alſo pray to our faithful Redeemer, that he would make us willing, for his ſake, to undergo the greateſt ignominy and contempt; and even to ſuffer patiently the moſt injurious blows, when the profeſſion of his truth requires it. When the prophet Micah declared the truth to king Ahab, he was contemptuouſly ſtruck on the face by Zedekiah, one of the falſe Prophets (*d*). And when Paul, in the preſence of the High Prieſt, aſſerted his innocence, and the integrity of his conſcience, the haughty pontif ordered the Apoſtle to be ſtruck on the face (*e*).

2. As for the plea that was urged for this injurious treatment of our bleſſed Lord, it is contained in theſe words: 'Anſwereſt thou the 'High Prieſt ſo? By this plea, the miſcreant would fain juſtify his vile action, and repreſent it as an inſtance of his zeal for the honour and dignity of the High Prieſt.

3. Laſtly, We are to conſider our bleſſed

(*d*) 1 Kings xxii. 24, (*e*) Acts xxiii. 2.

Lord's behaviour on this provoking occaſion. Though he was ſmitten, he did not ſtrike again; though he ſuffered, he threatened not. He did not command the heavens to pour down fire and brimſtone on the guilty head of this impious wretch, nor the earth to open under his feet, and ſwallow him up. However, the bleſſed Jeſus was not entirely ſilent at ſuch a public inſult, and unprecedented treatment, which was alſo approved of by the ſilence of the whole aſſembly; but with equal diſcretion and mildneſs, he ſhewed the injury that was done him.

This remonſtrance of our bleſſed Lord conſiſts of a double plea, grounded on his preceding apology, which alſo conſiſted of two parts. As if he had ſaid: In my anſwer I have either ſpoke well or ill: If I ſpoke ill, let it be proved; but if what I ſaid was reaſonable, why am I thus buffeted?

The firſt ſentence in the Greek original does not ſignify, if I have ſpoken evil things, lies, ſlander, and calumny (κακα), againſt the High Prieſt; but if I have ſpoken in an ill, rude, and indecent manner (κακως), and violated the reſpect due to the High Prieſt; for in this conſiſted our Saviour's pretended crime. They thought, that how true ſoever what he alledged might be, yet he groſsly offended the High Prieſt, in the form and manner of his defence.

The ſecond ſentence contains a juſt demand. If I have been wanting in the reſpect which the High Prieſt requires, bear witneſs of the evil. As if he had ſaid, "I here ſtand in the preſence

of

" of the whole court. If it be ſuppoſed that I " have ſpoke ill before the High Prieſt, and " violated the reſpect due to his perſon and dig- " nity, I ought to be previouſly accuſed of it; " and not only accuſed, but likewiſe convicted " and proved guilty of the crime: this the rules " of common equity and juſtice require, and " nothing can be more illegal and unjuſt than " to begin with the execution, and puniſh a " crime which has not yet been proved."

The other plea in this remonſtrance of Chriſt includes, firſt, a condition. 'If well,' *i. e.* " If I " have ſpoken what is juſt and reaſonable; if my " words contained nothing criminal, rude, or " diſreſpectful; if I have only ſpoken the truth " with that decent freedom, which becomes a " good cauſe and a good conſcience; make it " appear to the High Prieſt and the whole " council."

Secondly, A juſt reproof 'Why ſtrikeſt thou 'me?' This reproof is given by way of queſtion, as it more emphatically ſets forth the injuſtice of the procedure, 'Why, ſays our bleſſed Lord, 'ſtrikeſt thou me? THOU, who haſt neither 'right nor command ſo to do, ſtrikeſt ME, 'who am not yet convicted of having committed 'any fault, that deſerves this public inſult.' This reproof, indeed, our Saviour directs to the ſervant who had given him the blow; but at the ſame time, it is his deſign to touch the conſciences of every member of the council: for, however theſe Judges might conceit that, as they ſat in Moſes's chair, and adminiſtered juſ-

tice in God's name, all the decrees and ſentences that they paſt were to be obeyed as the Divine decrees; yet Chriſt intimates to them, that they allowed of all kinds of iniquitous practices in their court, and that the fundamental principles of juſtice were openly violated there.

This is briefly the import of our Saviour's remonſtrance. But ſome impious objector perhaps will ſay, Why did not Chriſt alſo turn his other cheek and offer it to the officer, after he had ſtruck him on one, according to the doctrine he had taught (*f*)? To this it may be anſwered, that Chriſt, even in the inſtance before us, perfectly conformed to what he had inculcated. He does not go out of the court after he had received this unjuſt blow, as by his Almighty power he might have done. He does not offer at any reſiſtance, meditates no revenge, for which his omnipotence could not want inſtruments or power. He did not command that the ſervants hand ſhould wither, like that of King Jeroboam, when he ſtretched it out againſt the Prophet of the Lord: But he ſtood ſtill and unmoved among his enemies; being ready to ſuffer himſelf to be ſtruck on the other cheek, if the malice of this wretch had gone ſo far, or God had permitted him. Nay, what is more, we know that a little time after, when he had been condemned to die, he offered his face to blows, and even to greater indignities: for it is ſaid, (*g*) 'Then did they ſpit in his 'face, and buffeted him, and others ſmote him

(*f*) Matt. v. 39. (*g*) Matt. xxvi. 67.

'with

'with the palms of their hands.' So that our bleſſed Lord cannot, with any colour of reaſon, be accuſed of not behaving conformably to the doctrines he taught.

But from this very behaviour of Chriſt, we may learn the true meaning of his command in the fifth chapter of St. Matthew. We ſee by this inſtance, that a diſcreet remonſtrance, or even a mild diſſuaſion from offering any farther injury, is by no means forbidden; but our Saviour's meaning ſeems to be this, That rather than have recourſe to any violent methods of revenge, we ought, when denied the common protection of the magiſtracy, patiently to bear injuries. That this is the true import of our bleſſed Lord's words, we here learn from his own example, which, in this as well as in other caſes, is to be accounted the beſt illuſtration of his doctrine. Hence it ſufficiently appears, that there is no juſt grounds for ridiculing this doctrine of Chriſt as an abſurd and impracticable maxim, and to rally Chriſtians on this account, as Julian the apoſtate formerly did, and the modern infidels ſtill do in imitation of ſo worthy an example.

Moreover, we are not only to admire and praiſe this gentleneſs of the bleſſed Jeſus, but alſo to propoſe it for our imitation. When the queſtion is, whether we muſt conform to Chriſt, who did not ſtrike again when he was ſtruck; or the world, whoſe maxim it is, That a man of honour ought to revenge an affront or injury offered him, either with his tongue, his pen,

or the ſword? No one who has any real regard for the name of Chriſt, but will confeſs that it is not the world, but Chriſt whom Chriſtians are to imitate. Now, if, notwithſtanding this confeſſion, we in our actions prefer the ſinful way of the world to the example of patience and gentleneſs exhibited by Chriſt, we ſhall one day hear that dreadful ſentence from our ſupreme Judge, 'Out of thine own mouth will I condemn 'thee, thou wicked ſervant.' Thou thyſelf couldeſt not but own, that my example was to be followed; and yet haſt ſuffered thyſelf to be carried away by the corrupt ſtream of a wicked cuſtom. Now thou art juſtly condemned with the world, as thou haſt preferred its ſinful ways. Before we proceed to the ſecond inſtance of the unjuſt treatment of our bleſſed Lord, we ſhall draw the following practical inferences.

1. The ſon of God took on him the form of a ſervant, and was given up to be abuſed by the vileſt ſlaves; becauſe men have given up their noble ſouls to the infamous ſlavery of ſin and Satan, of impetuous paſſions and impure deſires, which Chriſt has atoned for, on our repentance, by this branch of his ſufferings. On the other hand, he has obtained for his followers a powerful conſolation under all pain and public inſults, to which they are expoſed for his ſake. He has obtained for them an everlaſting exemption from the eternal ignominy and diſgrace, of being given up to the inſults and buffetings of Satan, as offenders againſt the Supreme Ma-

jeſty; and which They will inceſſantly feel, whom this incomprehenſible love, which moved the Son of God to take upon him the pain and ſhame that they have deſerved, does not bring to a ſincere repentance and amendment of life.

2. In bearing witneſs to the truth, we are to expect nothing but contempt, injuſtice, and inſults. If God does not leave the hands of the wicked at liberty to ſtrike the witneſſes of the truth, and inſult them by any act of violence, they exerciſe their malicious tongues with more virulence in ridiculing, reviling, and calumniating the good and virtuous. The wicked will give no quarter to any one who bears witneſs, that their works are evil. But it is infinitely better to ſuffer ourſelves to be beaten and inſulted with Chriſt for a ſhort time, than, after being flattered and honoured with the wicked, to be given up to everlaſting ſhame and diſgrace. Let us not fear to tell the world its own; let us bear witneſs to the truth; but then, at the ſame time, let us prepare for thoſe ſufferings which are annexed to ſuch ſincerity. This ought more particularly to be obſerved by thoſe, who one day are to march forth, and publicly to bear witneſs, againſt the wicked world. They muſt early baniſh from their minds all fear of man, all falſe delicacy and ſhame. They muſt prepare themſelves for the combat.

3. The world never makes leſs account of the rules of equity and juſtice than in its proceedings againſt Chriſt and his followers. An officer of a court of judicature is by no means permitted

mitted to interfere, during the examination of a criminal before a magiſtrate; and this ſervant of the High Prieſt would not have taken ſuch liberty at the trial of the murderer Barabbas, or any common malefactor. But againſt Chriſt and his members, the wicked preſume that they may commit any violence. Theſe, they pretend, are patient ſheep, who are to bear every outrage without opening their mouths. Nay, they make it a kind of diverſion to bring their patience to the teſt, by the moſt flagrant acts of injuſtice, to ſee how much they can bear without reſiſting. This unjuſt and inhuman practice is thus deſcribed in the apocryphal book of Wiſdom, (*b*) 'Let us examine him with deſpitefulneſs and 'torture, that we may know his meekneſs, and 'prove his patience.

4. The vices of maſters are generally copied by their ſervants. As the High Prieſt, the head of the Sanhedrim, was unjuſt and unmerciful; ſo were his officers and ſervants. This officer well knew how far he might venture; and poſſibly, he might read in the High Prieſt's looks that it would be very acceptable to him, if he checked the boldneſs of Jeſus of Nazareth with a blow on the face. Here was verified the obſervation of Solomon (*i*), 'If a ruler hearken 'to lies, all his ſervants are wicked.' It is the ſame in other reſpects. For inſtance, if the maſter lives in exceſs and riot, the ſervants ſoon learn to walk in the ſame way of perdition. If the maſter or miſtreſs, or both give them-

(*b*) Chap. ii. 19. (*i*) Prov. xxix. 12.

ſelves

ſelves up to criminal love, a chaſte ſervant in ſuch a houſe would be deemed a wonder. Where the heads of the family live in diſcord and contention, quarrelling, curſing and ſwearing; the ſervants will ſoon copy theſe vices, will be continually at variance, and full of rage and malice againſt each other. Therefore, as the ill-example of the heads of a family, cauſes ſuch great offence; and this offence, according to the ſaying of Chriſt (*i*), is followed by ſo dreadful a woe; how great is the obligation on thoſe who preſide over families, to ſet the beſt examples, of piety and virtue to their ſervants and dependents? that no ill behaviour of theirs may induce their inferiors to imitate their vices.

5. The more ardently a perſon loves the Lord Jeſus, the more will he be affected by every part of his undeſerved ſufferings. It is remarkable, that of all the Evangeliſts, St. John only has taken notice of this blow, which was inflicted on our bleſſed Lord at his examination. Not that the other Evangeliſts and Apoſtles had no real love for their Maſter; but as St. John was the Lord's boſom-diſciple, and, of all the Apoſtles, loved him with the moſt tender affection, ſo he was in a particular manner affected with every indignity, affront, and injury, offered to his beloved Maſter. This we ſhall alſo experience, whenever our hearts are inflamed with a truly cordial and ardent love of the Lord Jeſus. We ſhall then particularly attend to every incident of

(*i*) Matth. xviii. 7.

his

his ſufferings, and return him our ſincereſt thanks for every indignity, and every inſult he endured. Every thorn that pierced him, every ſtripe or blow, every pang he felt, will ſenſibly affect us, and wound us to the heart. To ſuch an intimate fellowſhip with Chriſt, and his ſufferings, ſhall we be brought by a ſincere love for him.

6. When we are more ſenſible of any injury done to our own character, or that of a friend, than when God's honour ſuffers any diminution, it is a ſign that we do not love God above all things. Many are like this ſervant, whoſe blind zeal was all on fire at this ſuppoſed want of due reſpect for the High Prieſt. Many are tranſported with indignation, at an affront or injury done to a perſon for whom they have a particular regard, or even at any want of due ceremony towards him; whereas they can, with the greateſt coolneſs, ſee the honour of God violated in the moſt flagrant manner. It behoves every one therefore to examine himſelf, whether he has a real zeal for the honour of God, and whether he is more concerned for the honour of Jeſus Chriſt, than for his own, or that of any other man?

7. The patience and gentleneſs of Chriſt paſſes the comprehenſion of man. It ſtill frequently falls out, that the patience and long-ſuffering of God ſeems unaccountable to his own children. When they ſee the prevalence of triumphant wickedneſs and impiety, in the world, they are apt to think, and ſay within them-

themſelves, How can God any longer connive at ſuch impious proceedings? How can he forbear from darting his thunder and lightning, and rouſing all the elements againſt the wicked, to avenge his offended Majeſty? But inſtead of wondering at the long-ſuffering of God, let us rather admire and adore his patience, as an inconceivable myſtery. Let us rather be perſuaded, that it is to his clemency we are indebted for our ſafety and ſalvation.

II.

I ſhall now proceed to conſider briefly the ſecond inſtance of the unjuſt treatment, which our bleſſed Saviour met with at his examination; and this conſiſted in his being bound, when he was examined: 'Now Annas had ſent him 'bound to Caiaphas the High Prieſt.' By taking notice of this circumſtance, the Evangeliſt means to ſhew, that they proceeded againſt Jeſus, quite contrary to all juſtice and equity, and even to the cuſtoms and laws of the Jews. For priſoners, when under examination, were looſed from their fetters, that they might make their anſwers with the greater freedom; but our bleſſed Lord was obliged to ſtand before them bound, with the manacles on his hands, as he was ſent from Annas to Caiaphas the High Prieſt. This circumſtance, at the ſame time, adds to the enormity of the injurious blow he received from an Officer of the court, who was permitted to ſtrike on the face a priſoner that was bound, and whoſe caſe was hardly begun to be enquired into; but this ſhews, that Jeſus had

had been previouſly appointed for death, however innocent he might be found on his trial. Hence we are to learn

That Chriſt, by defending the truth of his doctrine with his hands bound, ſhould teach us, that the truth of the Goſpel is to be maintained by words, and not with the ſword. This method of maintaining and propagating religion cannot plead the example of Jeſus, the Author of our faith, and Founder of the Chriſtian Religion. He would not allow his diſciple, Peter, to uſe the ſword in his defence. And when he himſelf defends his doctrine, his ſacred hands are bound, and the only weapon he uſes in bearing witneſs to the truth, is the tongue. It is therefore the characteriſtic of a falſe religion, and the ſure ſign of an Antichriſtian ſpirit, to uſe violence to propagate its doctrines, and compel others to embrace it by force.

THE PRAYER.

O Faithful and ever-living Saviour! praiſed be thy holy name for thine unparalleled patience, in bearing all the injuries, affronts, and barbarous indignities, inflicted on thee by cruel men. Inſtead of ignominy and contempt, thou art entitled to all honour, adoration, and eſteem, as the expreſs Image of the inviſible God: But thou haſt, for our ſake, offered thy ſacred and reſpectable Face, before which the very Angels veil their faces when dazzled by the effulgence of thy countenance, to be ſtruck,

and



and didſt not hide it from ſhame and ſpitting; and all this in order to obtain for us grace and boldneſs, to lift up our heads before God, that we may not be overwhelmed with ſhame and confuſion before his awful Tribunal. For this thine amazing condeſcenſion, we praiſe thee from our hearts, and humbly beſeech thee, that thou wilt make us willing, for thy ſake, to ſuffer contempt and ill-uſage from the world; and even account it our glory, our ornament, and crown, to be made like unto thee, the Firſt-born among many brethren. Grant that we may rather chuſe to be deſpiſed, ſmitten, and reviled with thee, than to have for our portion the periſhable, ſinful honours of the world, which will be followed by eternal ſhame, and inexpreſſible miſery; and that, after thy great example, we may finiſh our courſe with joy. Amen.

CONSIDERATION V.

Peter's *ſecond and third fall.*

'(a) AND a little while after, as Peter was 'gone out to the Porch, another 'maid ſaw him, and ſaid to thoſe that were 'there, This fellow was alſo with Jeſus of 'Nazareth. Then one ſaid unto him, Art thou 'not one of his diſciples? But Peter denied it 'again with an oath, Man I am not; I know

(a) Matth. xxvi. 71——74. Mark xiv. 69, 71. Luke xxii. 58——60. John xviii. 25, 27.

not

'not the man. And after a while, about the 'ſpace of an hour, another confidently affirmed, 'ſaying, Of a truth, this fellow alſo was with 'him; for he is a Galilean. Then they that 'ſtood by came up, and ſaid to Peter, Surely 'thou alſo art one of them; for thou art a Gali-'lean, and thy ſpeech agreeth thereto, and 'berayeth thee. One of the ſervants of the 'High Prieſt, (being his kinſman whoſe ear Pe-'ter had cut off) ſaith, Did not I ſee thee in the 'Garden with him? But Peter began to curſe and 'to ſwear, and again denied it, and ſaid, Man, 'I know not what thou ſayeſt: I know not this 'man of whom thou ſpeakeſt.'

In theſe words are related Peter's ſecond and third fall. This wavering diſciple had already denied his Lord and Maſter, and publicly abjured him. As he had once yielded to the temptation, his fall became ſtill greater. Thus it was in the fall of our firſt parents, which Chriſt was to expiate by his ſufferings. They did not immediately, at the very beginning, ſufficiently exert themſelves, and vigorouſly oppoſe the tempter; and therefore, they were gradually more and more entangled in his ſubtile ſnare.

I.

In Peter's ſecond denial of his Maſter, are mentioned the time when it happened, the manner of the temptation, and the heinous fall which was the conſequence of it.

As to the time of this ſecond denial, it is ſaid, 'And a little while after, as Peter was gone 'out

'out to the Porch, another maid ſaw him.' Thus, according to St. Luke's account; the ſecond denial followed cloſe upon the firſt *. A few minutes after he had denied his Maſter the firſt time, he heard the cock crow. Now, as our bleſſed Lord had before told him, that he ſhould deny him thrice, before the cock ſhould crow twice; it behoved Peter, by the admonition of the firſt crowing, to recollect himſelf, to withdraw his foot out of the ſnare, and guard againſt any farther temptation. But ſuch was the trouble and perturbation of his mind, that he knew not which way to turn himſelf. He was very ſenſible, that he had unwarily thruſt himſelf into a place of extreme danger, and therefore was for getting away from the croud of ſoldiers and ſervants, who ſtood about the fire. Accordingly, St. Matthew informs us, that 'he went out into the Porch (*b*),' *i. e.* he went towards the gate which opened from the court into the ſtreet, in order to ſteal away unobſerved. But ſo many eyes were fixed upon him, that they prevented his putting his deſign in execution. The way to the temptation was open to him; but when he was for making a retreat, every paſſage was barred and obſtructed.

As to the manner of his being aſſailed a ſecond time, it is thus deſcribed in the harmonized accounts of the Evangeliſts: 'As Peter 'was gone out to the Porch' †, *i. e.* into the

* μετα βραχυ ſcilicet διαστημα. (*b*) Chap. xxvi. 71.
† προαυλιον, πυλωνα.

court

court near the outer gate, he was obſerved, according to St. Mark, by the maid *, (namely, ſhe that kept the door) who, from the very firſt ſight of this ſtranger, had ſuſpected him, and now, 'began to ſay to thoſe who ſtood by, 'This is one of them.' As if ſhe had ſaid, However he may deny it, I am poſitive that he is one of Jeſus's diſciples. Upon this, according to St. Matthew's account, came another maid, who knew him by ſight, having often ſeen him in Jeruſalem along with Jeſus, 'and ſaid 'to them that were there, This man was alſo 'with Jeſus of Nazareth.' Thus Peter had two witneſſes againſt him, who both agreed in charging him with being a diſciple of Chriſt. This again drew the eyes of all who were preſent upon him; ſo that they attentively looked him in the face, and according to St. John's account, put the queſtion to him, 'Art not 'thou one of his diſciples?' But one of them, as St. Luke obſerves, after a more particular examination of his face, peremptorily ſaid, 'Thou art alſo one of them.' This man either knew him better than the reſt, or by this affected confidence, attempted to frighten him to a confeſſion, which of courſe would have ſet the whole multitude of ſervants upon him. Thus the number of witneſſes againſt Peter increaſed; and no doubt every word of the charge brought

* ἡ παιδισκη ἰδουσα αυτον παλιν. The maid ſeeing him again, and not 'A maid ſaw him again,' as it is rendered in our tranſlation. *W.*

againſt

againſt him, was a thunder-clap in his ears, and made his timorous, wavering heart tremble.

On this, unhappily ſucceeded Peter's ſecond fall, which conſiſted in lies and falſe oaths. At firſt it is ſaid, he denied it, and that doubly; for he denied that he was a diſciple of Jeſus of Nazareth, in theſe words, 'I am not (*c*);' and then he denied that he ever had any knowledge of Chriſt in theſe words, 'I do not know 'the man (*d*).' He, who once would not leave his Lord and Maſter, becauſe he found that he had the words of eternal life, now pretends that he never had any acquaintance with him, nor the leaſt knowledge of him. He who formerly had made this glorious confeſſion, 'Thou 'art Chriſt, the Son of the living God (*e*),' now calls him only a mere man, and publicly denies that he even knows him. But this was not all; for, according to St. Matthew, he confirms this ſecond denial with an oath, becauſe they would not believe him the firſt time on his bare word. Thus he not only tranſgreſſed his Maſter's commandment againſt ſwearing unneceſſarily (*f*); but likewiſe called God to witneſs a falſhood, wickedly profaning his awful name, and, as it were, defying his omniſcience. Before we proceed to the third denial, we ſhall make the following obſervations.

1. Satan violently harraſſes timorous ſouls. He knew how to make the greateſt advantage of the temptation he had begun; and having ſuc-

(*c*) Luke xxii. 58. John xviii. 25. (*d*) Matt. xxvi. 72.
(*e*) Matt. xvi. 16. (*f*) Matt. v. 33.

ceeded in diſcharging his firſt arrow at Peter, he ſoon lets fly another, without giving him time for recollection. He would be too crafty for us all, did not a ſuperior Eye watch over us, and confound all his black deſigns for our ruin. This ſhould induce us, when we are unhappily fallen, not to remain a moment in that dangerous ſtate, but immediately invoke the Divine aſſiſtance; for otherwiſe Satan takes advantage of this moment to bend his bow a ſecond time, and thus more dangerouſly wounds us.

2. A deſire of concealing any ſin often cauſes a greater ſin to be committed. Peter, having once pretended that he did not know Jeſus, would by no means contradict what he had ſaid. He thought that as he had told one lie, it was neceſſary to perſiſt in it; otherwiſe he ſhould not only be ridiculed as a liar, but immediately be apprehended as a diſciple of Jeſus. This dread of ſhame and danger, and the deſire of concealing his firſt fault, in which pride had a great ſhare, led him into the commiſſion of a greater; for he not only repeated the falſe aſſertion, but added to it a falſe oath.

3. As light and falſe ſwearing is not only forbidden by Chriſt, but contributed to the augmentation of our Saviour's ſufferings, every Chriſtian is obliged carefully to avoid that ſin. How muſt the heart of the bleſſed Jeſus have been pierced, at hearing Peter thus abominably profaning the name of his heavenly Father, and calling Him, to whom all things are known, as a witneſs to a manifeſt untruth? But alas!

nothing is more common among nominal Chriſtians than ſuch oaths and atteſtations, in order to gain credit in the moſt frivolous affairs, or to confirm lies and falſhood. In every trifle, either the ſacred and awful name of God is profaned, or the ſoul, life, and ſalvation ſtaked as a pledge. Our bleſſed Lord, it is true, has alſo expiated theſe ſins, and obtained pardon for thoſe who ſincerely repent of them; but if we would avoid the threatenings annexed to ſuch crimes in the third Commandment, we muſt abſtain from this ſinful cuſtom.

II.

The ſecond denial was ſucceeded by Peter's third denial. Here, in the firſt place, the ſpace of time is again mentioned: 'After a while,' or as St. Luke ſays. 'About the ſpace of one hour.' So much time, for recollecting and recovering himſelf from his perplexity, did the long-ſuffering of God give Peter, before he permitted the third and moſt violent temptation to aſſault him. This time allowed him for conſideration, he ſhould have beſtowed on the ſalvation of his ſoul, in repentance, and in fervent prayer to God, that he would draw his foot out of the ſnare, and open to him a retreat from this dangerous place. But his reſolution to wait the iſſue of his Maſter's trial ſtill detained him there. He likewiſe grew more ſecure and confident; and thought, that as he had once cleared himſelf by a lie, and by the ſubſequent oath, he ſhould be no longer ſuſpected, and conſequently no farther aſſault was to be apprehended. He there-

fore, the better to conceal his fear, probably went back from the porch, and again mingled in the dangerous company of the officers and ſervants. But when he was moſt ſecure, his laſt fall was nigh at hand. In this interval of an hour, many things had paſſed with relation to the Lord Jeſus. Falſe witneſſes had been ſuborned againſt him; ſentence of death had been pronounced on him; his ſacred face had been ſpit on, and many opprobrious inſults offered him. All this Peter, undoubtedly, either heard or ſaw; and this ſhocking ſpectacle he could not behold without the moſt violent emotions. In the next place, we have an account of the manner of his third aſſault. He was this time to ſtand three ſevere trials.

Of the firſt it is ſaid, 'One that ſtood by,' who by the light of the fire had a full view of him, ſaid aloud before all the by-ſtanders, That man is a diſciple of Jeſus of Nazareth; and he not only averred it, but confirmed it with an oath: 'Of a truth, this fellow was alſo with him;' and as Peter had denied the charge, this man adduces a proof of the truth of it from Peter's country and dialect, 'for he is a Galilean.'

The ſecond expoſtulation was ſtill the more alarming. For, according to the account given by St. Matthew and St. Mark, the other ſervants who ſtood about the fire, laying hold of this proof, preſſed him more cloſely, ſaying, 'Surely thou art a Galilean, for thy ſpeech be-'wrayeth thee.' The Galileans, it ſeems, had

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a kind of ruſtic pronunciation, by which they were eaſily diſtinguiſhable from the reſt of the Jews; as, in moſt nations, every province has its particular dialect.

The third aſſault made the greateſt impreſſion on Peter, both with regard to the perſon who accoſted him, and the words he made uſe of. The perſon was a ſervant of the High Prieſt, and a kinſman to Malchus, whoſe ear Peter had cut off in the garden. This man by the clear moon-ſhine, and the great number of torches and lanterns, had a full view of Peter's face, and retained ſome knowledge of him. Hence he ſays, 'Did not I ſee thee in the gar-'den with him?' By this, Peter was convicted not only of having formerly attended on Jeſus, but that the ſame night, and only a few hours before, he was among his diſciples.

This tripple attack is followed by Peter's third and moſt grievous fall, in which three degrees are to be obſerved. 1. He denied it, 'I know 'not the man of whom you ſpeak;' or, according to St. Luke, 'Man, I know not what thou 'ſayeſt. 2. He confirmed it with an oath, and thus again profaned the ſacred name of God; calling on the moſt juſt and omniſcient Being as a witneſs to his lies and falſe aſſertions. 3. He began to curſe, or imprecate that God might inflict ſome ſignal puniſhment on him, and renounced his part in the kingdom of God, if he knew this Jeſus, or was one of his diſciples. Thus he loved his life better than his Lord and Saviour, and was more afraid of men

than of God and his judgments. Now Peter, according to the Jewiſh law, might have gone into the Court, and given evidence in behalf of the perſon accuſed; whereas, inſtead of this, he not only ſtays without, but ſwears, that he does not ſo much as know the Perſon who ſtood before the court, and never had any concern with him. The ſheep denies his Shepherd, who ſo often had called him by his name. From Peter's third denial we may draw the following inferences.

1. Satan uſes all his artifice to render the entrance into temptation eaſy, and the retreat difficult and hazardous. Peter was at little trouble to get into the High Prieſt's palace; one ſingle fair word from an acquaintance procured admittance; but when he was inclined to go out again, a multitude of obſtacles prevented him. Alas! how eaſily doth ſin allure corrupt man; eſpecially when it promiſes worldly advantages, and carnal pleaſures. We inſenſibly contract an intimacy with it; and practice increaſes it to a habit: But we find it difficult to extricate ourſelves, when we are once entangled in the ſnares of Satan. Let us lay this to heart, whenever we are enticed to ſin. Let us conſider the conſequence of it; the remorſe of conſcience, the anguiſh and ſorrow, which will enſue.

2. It is the nature of ſin to gather ſtrength and encreaſe by continuance. It is like a river which near its ſource is but a ſmall and ſhallow ſtream; but in its courſe becomes wider and deeper. This Peter experienced to his great

ſorrow;

ſorrow; for he gradually ſunk deeper and deeper into the temptation. His crime was firſt a ſimple denial of his Maſter, which he afterwards confirms with an oath, and at laſt curſes his own ſoul to gain the greater credit. This is a terrible inſtance of the different gradations of ſin. Therefore, let not the deceitfulneſs of ſin beguile thee. Art thou unhappily fallen? haſt thou been ſurpriſed by ſin? haſt thou been drawn away to commit an offence againſt thy Creator? rouſe thyſelf without delay, and call upon God to deliver thee out of the ſnare of temptation.

3. The critical hour of temptation lays open the evil, which lurks in the human heart. Peter never thought that he could run ſuch enormous lengths. When our bleſſed Lord only warned him of his denying his Maſter, he would not believe him; much leſs would he have been perſuaded, that he ſhould deny him with oaths and imprecations. On the contrary, he thought that he had ſuch a ſincere and ardent love for Chriſt, that he could chearfully go to priſon and to death with him. But the temptation, with which Satan ſifted him, manifeſted the latent depravity of his heart, which was now brought to light like the chaff in a ſieve. Poſſibly many, who read this, may ſay, "Had "I been in Peter's place, I ſhould have ſhowed "more courage and reſolution, than to be ſo "ſhamefully foiled by a ſervant-maid, ſo as to "deny my Saviour." But to ſuch perſons it may be juſtly anſwered, 'Thou alſo art one of

'them; for thy ſpeech bewrayeth thee.' Whoever argues in this manner little knows his own heart; and his ſtrength, in the hour of temptation, will be little anſwerable to the fond opinion he conceives of it.

4. Peter's crime is ſtill daily committed among Chriſtians. Did Peter break his proteſtation, that he was ready to go to priſon and to death with the Lord Jeſus? We have daily inſtances of many thouſands, who in their baptiſm, or on a ſick bed, have vowed to give up their lives entirely to the ſervice of Chriſt, but afterwards break ſuch pious reſolutions and vows. Did Peter deny his Lord and Maſter? Alas! what is more common than for thoſe who profeſs him with the mouth, to deny him in their actions? Does not the ambitious man deny his Saviour, whoſe humility was ſo conſpicuous? Does not the glutton, the drunkard, and the laſcivious, deny the ſober, the chaſte, and the temperate Jeſus? Does not the revengeful and paſſionate man deny the meek, the mild, and forgiving Jeſus? And though all theſe may make their boaſt of Chriſt, and call themſelves by his ſacred name, yet in reality they ſay, 'I know not the 'man.' Was Peter by his puſillanimity and fear of man prevailed upon to tell a lye? What is more common among Chriſtians, than to make uſe of expreſſions contrary to the purity of truth? And if Peter, by the extreme danger of his life, was prompted to grievous ſins, and ſurpriſed by the rapidity of ſudden repeated temptations; many commit the very ſame ſin only for

for the ſake of a fleeting pleaſure, or petty advantage; ſo that if he ſunk in a violent hurricane, others are overſet by a gentle breeze. What little cauſe have we therefore to reproach Peter, and think ourſelves ſuperior to him! On the contrary, it better becomes us to humble ourſelves before God, and ſupplicate for his grace, who again received him into favour.

THE PRAYER.

OMniſcient and ever-living God, who knoweſt our hearts better than we do ourſelves, and in thy ſacred Word, haſt given a clear teſtimony of this truth! keep us, we beſeech thee, from an overweening opinion of our own ſtrength and ſufficiency. May we every moment learn to depend on thee, and to implore thy Almighty aid to ſecure us from falling into the ſnares of temptation. Grant, O Lord, that by the example of Peter, and his grievous fall, we may be more cautious, and ſhun all opportunities that may lead us into ſin; and that when we are unhappily fallen, we may fly to thy mercy to raiſe us up again, for the ſake of thy beloved Son Jeſus Chriſt, our Mediator and Advocate. Amen.

CONSIDERATION VI.

The recovery of Peter *after his fall.*

'(a) AND immediately, while Peter yet 'ſpake, the cock crew the ſecond time. 'And the Lord turned, and looked on Peter: 'And Peter remembered the word of the Lord, 'how he had ſaid unto him, Before the cock 'crow twice, thou ſhalt deny me thrice. And 'he went out, and wept bitterly.'

We have hitherto conſidered Peter's threefold heinous fall, who had extremely wounded his conſcience by denying his Maſter three times ſucceſſively, and at laſt confirmed his denial by oaths and imprecations. At preſent, we ſhall turn our thoughts to Peter's recovery from this grievous fall, or rather conſider how he was again raiſed up by his Lord and Saviour. His fall proceeded from his own weakneſs; but to riſe again was beyond his ability. Here we ſhall take notice,

Firſt, Of the means by which he was awakened to repentance.

Secondly, We ſhall conſider the ſigns and fruits of his ſincere repentance.

I.

As to the means by which he was awakened to repentance, ſome were external, and others internal. The external were the crowing of

(a) Matt. xxvi. 74, 75. Mark xiv. 72. Luke xxii. 60, 61, 62. John xviii. 27.

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the cock, and the piercing look of the Lord Jeſus.

As to the former it is ſaid, 'And immediately, while he was yet ſpeaking, the cock crew the ſecond time.' When Peter had denied his Maſter the firſt time, he likewiſe heard the firſt crowing of the cock (*b*). But his mind was at that time ſo ſeized with apprehenſions of the danger he was in, that it made no impreſſion on it. His conſcience was lulled in ſo profound a lethargy, that it was not awakened by the firſt crowing of this wakeful bird. But the ſecond crowing of the cock ſunk deeply into his heart. He had, as St. Matthew and St. Mark relate this tranſaction, already began to curſe, and to aver with the moſt terrible imprecations on his own ſoul, that he was not a diſciple of Chriſt. But the cock by his crowing interrupted him in his impious career. 'While he was yet ſpeaking, the cock crew;' upon which, Peter was immediately ſtruck dumb, put an end to his oaths and imprecations, and now entirely bent his thoughts on getting away from this dangerous place. Had he attended to the firſt crowing of the cock, and called to mind the words of the Lord Jeſus, his fall would not have been ſo great; and he would not have proceeded from lying to ſwearing, and from oaths to imprecations. But the conſequence of paying no regard to God's firſt warning is, that a man ſinks deeper into ſin, and

(*b*) Mark xiv. 68.

becomes

becomes more entangled in the ſnares of Satan.

The other external cauſe of Peter's repentance was a ſignificant and penetrating look from the bleſſed Jeſus: 'The Lord turned 'about, and looked on Peter.' The crowing of the cock was not ſufficient to bring him to a ſenſe of his baſeneſs; but it was immediately followed by a look from Jeſus, which penetrated into his inmoſt ſoul, and awakened his lethargic conſcience.

But what imagination is capable of forming an idea of this look of the Son of God, who was the expreſs image of his Father? Though an affectionate and benign, and at the ſame time a majeſtic, ſweetneſs beamed forth from the eyes of the Lord Jeſus at other times; yet there was ſomething extraordinary in this piercing look, which had ſuch a wonderful effect on Peter's heart. What ſtrong emotions did the bleſſed Jeſus expreſs in this look! A compaſſionate love mixed with grief, and an ardent deſire of reclaiming his diſciple, ſhot from the eyes of the Son of God; and in this look, an effulgent beam of Divine grace darted into Peter's benighted ſoul. Though we do not read that our Saviour, when he looked at Peter, ſpoke a ſingle word to him, yet Peter ſaw a multitude of ideas in this expreſſive look; and, with the utmoſt confuſion, experienced in it his Maſter's unalterable affection to him, notwithſtanding his infamous perfidy to his Lord and Saviour. This look of his Maſter, as it were, thus addreſſed

addreſſed him, " O Simon, Simon! art thou a " ſtranger to this well-known face? How have " I deſerved this baſe ingratitude at thy hands, " which penetrates and grieves my very ſoul? " Is it not enough, that the traitor Judas has " betrayed me? And muſt I alſo be ſo ſhame- " fully denied by thee? Where are thy mighty " promiſes, and boaſted reſolution of going to " priſon and to death with me? Alas! how ſoon " haſt thou forgot all my former kindneſs, " and thy ſanguine proteſtations!" Theſe, or words of the like import, though he did not hear them with his ears, were loudly proclaimed to him by his conſcience, which was now rouſed and awakened by his Maſter's piercing look.

Theſe two external means produced an internal motive of repentance; which was the recollection of our Saviour's words, by which he had forewarned Peter of this grievous fall. When the cock had awakened his conſcience, and an expreſſive look from Chriſt had enlightened it, and delivered him from the power of darkneſs; his memory preſented to him, in large and legible characters, theſe words of his Lord and Maſter, ' Before the cock crow twice, thou ' ſhalt deny me thrice.' With theſe words, it doubtleſs occurred to his mind, how injuriouſly and baſely he had then behaved towards the Lord Jeſus; how arrogantly he had ſet himſelf above all the other diſciples, and what mighty things he had promiſed, relying on his own ſtrength, yet without making good the very leaſt of his proteſtations. What a flood of anguiſh and ſor-

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row muſt have overwhelmed his ſoul, at the recollection of the words of Chriſt? It is not to be doubted, that the Spirit of grace, at the ſame time, did not fail to put him in mind of ſome other conſolatory words of Chriſt; namely, that he was his Mediator and Interceſſor, and had prayed for him, that his faith might not fail. Theſe and other comfortable words to the ſame purpoſe, were, indeed, the only ſolace, by which Peter muſt have been ſupported under his inexpreſſible trouble on this occaſion, otherwiſe he had probably ſunk into ſuch a dejection of mind, which, like that of Judas, might have plunged him in the abyſs of deſpair; though there was a wide difference between Peter's fall and the perfidy of Judas. For if Judas did not ſwear and curſe ſo profanely as Peter; yet he committed the horrid crime of betraying and delivering up his Maſter; with deliberation and a fixed deſign: Whereas it was through mere indiſcretion and inadvertency, that Peter fell into the danger and the occaſion of ſinning, of which Satan induſtriouſly took advantage, ſo as to induce him from the fear of death to deny his Maſter.

But who will ſay, that there could be remaining in Peter's heart, a ſecret faith in Chriſt, ſince he went ſo far as to deny him. St. Paul cloſely connects the confeſſion of the mouth with the faith of the heart, in theſe words: 'With the 'heart man believeth unto righteouſneſs; and 'with the mouth confeſſion is made unto ſalva-'tion (*c*).' How then can a true faith in Chriſt be

(*c*) Rom. x. 9, 10.

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conſiſtent with a denial of him? Does not ſuch an aſſertion ſeparate thoſe things which God hath joined together? Therefore Peter's faith was abſolutely extinguiſhed by this tempeſt; but by the gracious look of Jeſus Chriſt it was rekindled, and ever after blazed in a conſtant and pure flame. This grace Chriſt had previouſly obtained for Peter at the Divine Tribunal, and, at the ſame time, had aſſured him of it: Behold! ſaid our bleſſed Lord, Satan hath deſired to have you, that he might ſift you like wheat (*d*), and by that means for ever to deprive you of faith and ſalvation. But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not, nor be irrecoverably ſtiffled for ever *. 'And 'when thou art converted,' and by true repentance art again received into that ſtate of grace from which thou art fallen, 'ſtrengthen thy 'brethren.'

Hence we may learn the following truths.

1. It is a particular favour of God, when he calls a ſecond and third time to a ſoul, which has once heard his awakening voice. Peter, inſtead of attending to the crowing of the cock, which ſhould have brought him to reflection, let it paſs unheeded like a common ſound; yet the indulgent Providence of God permits him to be admoniſhed, and ſummoned to repentance, by the ſame alarming incident. O the wretchedfolly of thoſe, who abuſe this goodneſs of God, and

(*d*) Luke xxii. 31, 32.

* ὡςε μη τηλειον ἀπολεσθαι, ut non finaliter pereat. Sic CHRYSOSTOMUS: Οὐκ ειπεν, ἱνα μη ἀρνηση, αλλ', ὡςε μη ἐκλειπειν την πιςιν, ὡςε μη τελειον ἀπολεσθαι, Hom. 82. in Matth. Tom. II. p. 512. Ed. Savilian.

make

make light of the firſt invitations and admonitions of his compaſſionate love, calling them to repentance! This fatal neglect uſually proceeds from a notion, that their preſent circumſtances will not allow of entering on the arduous work of repentance; that theſe awakenings and friendly motions will be followed by others; that God will bear with them ſometime longer: and as they are not without a purpoſe of being converted, they flatter themſelves that he will always keep open for them an acceſs to the Throne of Grace. Alas! how imprudently do ſuch perſons act! for in ſuch a caſe the heart not only becomes more and more hardened and enured to ſin, but God, when his firſt inviting and gracious call is ſlighted, generally accompanies his ſubſequent calls with ſenſible chaſtiſements; which might have been avoided by an early compliance with his firſt invitation. Let every one, therefore, commune with his own heart, and reflect on the frequent ſummons to repentance with which God has favoured him in the courſe of his life; and how, on ſeveral occaſions, and by frequent intervals, they have been moved, and, as it were, touched to the quick. If all theſe intimations be neglected, the heart is in the utmoſt danger of being finally hardened by the deceitfulneſs of ſin.

3. Our indulgent and merciful Saviour turns towards a ſinner, even before the ſinner turns to him. Before Peter looked on Chriſt with eyes overflowing with tears, Chriſt looked on Peter with eyes full of pity and compaſſion, and turned

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to him his benign countenance, while he turned his back on his ſlighted Lord. Thus it daily happens. Grace prevents the wretched ſinner; and, by a penetrating, affectionate glance, touches his depraved heart, and even offers him an aſſiſting hand, while he is ſtill lying in the mire of ſin. Therefore, let none plead, that it is out of his power to convert himſelf: for to make the firſt advances is not required of him, but only that he will not reject preventing grace, when it kindly looks on him in his miſery; and if he only allows it admiſſion into his heart, it there begins, carries on, and completes the work of converſion. O that men, amidſt the croud of earthly and idle thoughts, would better attend to the gracious Voice of God, daily calling them to repentance, by his Spirit, Word, and Miniſtry.

4. The eyes and ears are the two chief inlets through which life and death make their way into the ſoul. Through theſe, death entered into the ſoul of our firſt progenitors, and from them hath been continued on all their deſcendants. They looked on the forbidden tree, and liſtened to the deluſive remonſtrances of the tempter. For want of carefully ſecuring theſe avenues, the fort, which is otherwiſe impregnable, is entered and taken. St. Peter's fall was likewiſe owing to a fatal curioſity of indulging theſe ſenſes. He was for ſeeing what would be the event; and on hearing himſelf ſucceſſively and publicly charged, by ſeveral perſons, of being a diſciple of Jeſus of Nazareth, his ſoul was ſeized with that dread of death, which extinguiſhed his faith. But

through the ſame inlets, by which ſpiritual death had made its way into his mind, the Divine life again alſo inſinuates itſelf. His ears are pierced with the crowing of the cock, awakening him to repentance; and his eyes meet the gracious glance from Jeſus Chriſt, by which the extinguiſhed flame of his faith is re-kindled.

5. Our merciful High Prieſt helps the weakneſs of our memory, and, in a proper ſeaſon, puts us in mind of his words. The expreſſive look from our bleſſed Lord refreſhed and enlightened Peter's memory; ſo that he thought of his Saviour's words, and called to mind the warning which Chriſt had given him. Thus the Word of God, like ſeed buried in the earth, often lies buried in the memory for a time, without producing any ſalutary effect; but afterwards becomes the cauſe of repentance and converſion, when our bleſſed, Saviour by his Spirit, again puts the ſinner in mind of it.

II.

The ſigns and fruits of Peter's repentance, are likewiſe mentioned in the text cited above. What paſſed inwardly in his heart, the Evangeliſts have left to our own reflection; but they have ſpecified the external ſigns, which evidenced the truth of Peter's repentance. With regard to theſe ſigns, the three following particulars occur in the Goſpel.

1. Peter quitted the High Prieſt's palace, and with it the tempter's ſnare, and the occaſion of his fall. He could not think of continuing a moment longer in the place, where he had ſo baſely

baſely denied his Lord and Saviour. Perceiving that the bleſſed Jeſus, whom he had ſo grievouſly injured, was ſtill his friend, the ſight of his Maſter's enemies grew inſupportable to him. He therefore haſtened away, and broke from them abruptly; and as ſoon as he was irradiated by the light of our Saviour's countenance, would have no farther fellowſhip with the unfruitful works of darkneſs, which were going forward in this congregation of the wicked. As he was now reſolved to get away from this priſon of Satan, in which he had voluntarily ſuffered himſelf to be ſhut up, God was pleaſed to open a way for him to eſcape; ſo that he went away without any hinderance or moleſtation. Here he ſtood in need of the ſafe-conduct, which Chriſt had procured for his diſciples before he was ſeized, by ſaying unto his enemies, 'If 'therefore, ye ſeek me, let theſe go their 'way.'

2. He covered his face; for that is the proper ſenſe of the Greek word here uſed by St. Mark *: he caſt, or drew one of the ends of his upper garment over his head †, with which he covered his face; as was uſual with mourners, or perſons under affliction, that they might not ſee,

* ἐπιβαλων ſcil. το ἱματιον, ut Marc. XI. 7. vel ἐπιβλημα. THEOPHYLACTUS τετ, ἐστιν ἐπικαλυψαμενος την κεφαλην. Sic ISOCRATES: ἐγκαλυψαμενος ἐκλαιε. Et CURTIUS lib. IV. cap. 10. 34. Capite velato diu flevit.

† In the Engliſh tranſlation, 'When he thought thereon,' *i. e.* when he caſt [his thoughts], or according to others [his garment]; neither of the ſubſtantives being expreſſed in the Original. *W.*

or be ſeen by others (*e*). By thus covering his face, he ſhewed both his grief and ſhame for what was paſt; but this ſhame was not ſufficient. For as he had openly denied Chriſt, he ſhould have publicly recanted his denial; and as he had not been aſhamed of ſinning, he ought not to have been aſhamed of acknowledging his ſin, and of making ſome amends for his fault. But now, he was excuſed from this. He had no occaſion at preſent to go with Chriſt to priſon and to death, but only to repent in ſecret, and wait for the Divine aſſiſtance. But afterwards, when he came to be anointed with the Holy Ghoſt, he made ample compenſation for his timidity and weakneſs. As he had now thrice denied his Maſter in Caiaphas's houſe, where the whole Sanhedrim was aſſembled; ſo he afterwards three ſeveral times profeſſed Chriſt with great boldneſs and courage, even in the preſence of the ſame Council (*f*). He then not only intrepidly appeared with open face; but alſo expoſed his naked back, and with joy received the ſtripes, which were inflicted on him by order of the Sanhedrim for his reſolute confeſſion of Jeſus Chriſt (*g*).

3. He gave a free vent to his tears: 'He went 'out, and wept bitterly.' The anguiſh of his heart was too violent to be any longer ſuppreſſed; but it burſt forth like a torrent, and vented itſelf in tears. Theſe tears proceeded both from ſorrow, and a tender love for his Lord and Maſter,

(*e*) 2 Sam. xv. 30. xix. 4. Jer. xiv. 3, 4. (*f*) Acts iv. 9—12. 19, 20. v. 29—32. (*g*) Acts v. 40, 41.

whom he had ſo baſely denied; ſo that from this rock, Peter, the water of repentance guſhed; which was not ſtruck with Moſes's rod, but by a powerful and affectionate look of the Lord Jeſus. The ſincerity of Peter's repentance afterwards ſhewed itſelf by the abundant fruits, which it produced: For he never after relapſed into the like fault; but boldly, and even to death, profeſſed the faith of Jeſus Chriſt. Hence we may obſerve,

1. That the firſt ſign of a real converſion is the forſaking all wicked company. Thus Peter ſhewed the ſincerity of his repentance; for, inſtantly, and without delay, he withdrew from that wicked company, which had occaſioned his unhappy fall. If the wicked will not leave us, when we ſay with David, 'Depart from me, 'all ye workers of iniquity (*b*),' we muſt leave them, and, without any procraſtination, avoid and fly from the occaſions of ſinning. It behoves every one, therefore, to aſk his own heart, Whether he is entangled in ſuch acquaintance, from whom, he is abundantly convinced, he is ſo far from reaping any manner of benefit, that they are an extreme detriment to his peace of mind? And whether, notwithſtanding ſuch a conviction, he has the courage manfully to declare for his Lord and Saviour, and extricate himſelf out of this ſnare of Satan? Alas! it is notorious, that this is one of the moſt common obſtacles to the converſion of a ſinner. The converſation of ſuch perſons ſtifles all the ſucceſſive workings of

(*b*) Pſ. vi. 8.

grace in a well inclined mind, and makes it averſe to ſerious thoughts. Let no one excuſe himſelf, and ſay, I cannot quit ſuch company, though I ſincerely deſign it; for he may be aſſured, that as God opened a way to Peter to eſcape, as ſoon as he was really inclined to withdraw himſelf from the contagion; ſo will he ſhew the like kindneſs to him, and aſſiſt his endeavours with his all-ſufficient grace.

2. As Peter was received into favour, and obtained pardon and forgiveneſs, no ſinner ought to deſpair of mercy. A Chriſtian, who has the ſtrongeſt faith and reſolution, may be alarmed at Peter's fall; but Peter's repentance may inſpire the moſt wretched ſinner with comfortable hopes of acceptance with God. That merciful hand, which was held out to this ſinking Apoſtle; ſtopped him ſhort amidſt the moſt terrible imprecations; and ſnatched him from perdition; can alſo lay hold of thee, O deſponding ſinner, and draw thee out of the mire of ſin, that thou ſink not. Peter's repentance ſhould therefore be an efficacious balſam of life and comfort to every wounded conſcience, every troubled and dejected mind, which begins to have a ſenſe of the greatneſs of its ſins, and ſees into what an abyſs of miſery it has plunged itſelf. The Lion of the tribe of Judah, who reſcued this wandering ſheep from the jaws of the infernal lion, that ſeeketh whom he may devour, can, and will, deliver every ſoul that earneſtly implores his aid; for is redounds to the glory of his grace to wreſt from

Satan's

Satan's hold a great ſinner, who ſeems loſt beyond all hope; to change his obdurate heart; and to diſplay the wonders of mercy and redeeming love, in reſcuing his ſoul from deſtruction. This inſtance of Peter's reception into favour may afford the greater comfort and joy to all wounded and terrified minds, if they reflect that our bleſſed Saviour, when he converſed with Peter after his reſurrection, never upbraided him with his heinous fall. He no ſooner had bewailed his baſeneſs and recovered from his fall, but his merciful Saviour permitted the whole tranſaction to be buried in oblivion, and received him again into favour. Thus, O repenting ſinner, ſhalt thou alſo partake of his free mercy, if thou wilt only ſuffer his grace to deſcend into thy heart. Thy former profligate life, and heinous tranſgreſſions ſhall be eternally forgotten; they ſhall not be objected againſt thee at the tribunal of God; they ſhall be caſt into the depth of the ſea, ſo that they ſhall never riſe up in judgment againſt thee. For this end has thy compaſſionate Mediator cauſed Peter's repentance to be recorded in the hiſtory of his ſufferings, that thou mighteſt thence know the ſalutary fruits and effect of his paſſion, and avail thyſelf of them to thy comfort and ſalvation. Ariſe immediately from thy fall; thy Saviour is willing and ready to help thee. Confer not long with fleſh and blood; but haſten to deliver thy ſoul. Fly from wicked company; avoid every occaſion of ſinning; obſtruct not the influence of divine grace, which will produce in thee ſhame and contrition, re-

pentance and godly ſorrow, and will ſoften thy ſtony heart, and make it a fountain of ſalutary tears. Go out and weep bitterly, that thou haſt denied the Lord that bought thee: Hope in his grace, though thou haſt deſerved only his wrath and the diſpleaſure of God; and then be aſſured that in this hope thou ſhalt not be diſappointed.

THE PRAYER.

O Bleſſed Jeſus, faithful and adorable Saviour! we praiſe thee for the glorious example of thy mercy, which thou haſt ſhewn to thy fallen diſciple Peter, for the comfort and ſupport of all repenting ſinners in all ſucceeding generations to the end of the world. Praiſed be thy name, who, in the midſt of thy ignominy and ill treatment when the ſentence of death was paſſed on thee, didſt not forget thine unhappy fallen diſciple, and, by a look expreſſive of thy paſtoral care and tenderneſs, didſt recall this ſtrayed ſheep from his devious wanderings. We believe, O bleſſed Jeſus, that in thy exalted ſtate of glorification, thou ſtill retaineſt the ſame affectionate love and compaſſion towards the meaneſt and moſt dejected ſinner, as in the days of thy humiliation and ſufferings. Be pleaſed to irradiate our hearts with this thy loving kindneſs; and let this example make ſuch a deep impreſſion on our minds, as may inſpire us with hope in thy mercy, and preſerve us from ſinking into deſpair. Look upon us with an eye of pity and compaſſion, when we are unhappily fallen;

fallen; and viſit us with thy grace, that we may return into the way of ſalvation. Amen.

CONSIDERATION VII.

The behaviour of the LORD JESUS *during the unjuſt proceedings of the Sanhedrim, or great Council of* Jews.

'(a) NOW the chief Prieſts and Elders, 'and all the Council, ſought falſe 'witneſs againſt Jeſus, to put him to death; 'but found none. Yea, though many bare 'falſe witneſs againſt him, their teſtimony 'agreed not together. At the laſt came two 'falſe witneſſes, and bare falſe teſtimony againſt 'him, ſaying, We heard him ſay, I am able to '[I will] deſtroy this temple of God that is 'made with hands, and within three days I 'will build another made without hands. 'But neither ſo did their witneſs agree together. 'Then the High Prieſt aroſe and ſtood in the 'midſt, and aſked Jeſus, ſaying, Anſwereſt 'thou nothing? What is it that theſe witneſs 'againſt thee? But Jeſus held his peace, and 'anſwered nothing.'

Theſe words exhibit to us the behaviour of the Lord Jeſus during the unjuſt proceedings of the Sanhedrim. In which we ſhall

Firſt, Conſider the iniquitous proceeding of that aſſembly.

Secondly, Chriſt's behaviour on that occaſion.

(a) Matt. xxvi. 59—63. Mark xiv. 55—61.

I. Previous

I.

Previous to the former, let us conſider the perſons who concurred in the guilt of thoſe unjuſt proceedings; and theſe were the chief Prieſts, the Elders, and the whole Council *. The members of the Sanhedrim or great Council, who were very numerous, and conſtituted both the eccleſiaſtical and civil polity of the Jews, were now aſſembled in the High Prieſt's palace to aſſiſt at Jeſus's trial, and to pronounce ſentence of death on him.

It may be thought ſomewhat ſtrange, that the whole Council ſhould meet at ſo late and unſeaſonable a time of the night in the palace of the High Prieſt, and that they did not appoint a ſelect committee for conducting their deſigns. But this was, in the firſt place, to make the people believe, that the paſſing ſentence on Jeſus of Nazareth was an affair of the higheſt neceſſity and importance, which required the preſence of the whole Council, and that the members of it, foregoing their natural reſt, ſhould, in a very extraordinary manner, and contrary to the eſtabliſhed cuſtom †, ſit in the night, becauſe the affair would not admit of any delay. Another motive probably was, that Pilate, the Roman governour, might conceive a higher idea of the importance of the trial; and the more readily be induced to order the execution of a ſentence, which had been unani-

* See the firſt Conſideration on the ſufferings before the ſpiritual court, p. 232, 233.

† Vide LIGHTFOOTI Hor. Heb. & Talmud. ad Matt. xxvii. 1.

mouſly

mouſly paſſed on Jeſus by ſuch an auguſt aſſembly, and at ſuch an extraordinary hour. Such are the pretences with which the prince of this world, to this very day, impoſes on the unthinking multitude. When he has by his evil ſuggeſtions deluded and miſled councils, convocations, ſynods, *&c.* to condemn real goodneſs; to pronounce truth to be error, and true piety a new ſect and dangerous hereſy, he can be at no loſs to bring ſuperficial minds over to his party. They think, that councils have proved at large ſuch and ſuch doctrines and poſitions by their ſolemn decrees; and that perſons of ſuch great learning and knowledge would not give a ſanction to ſuch things, without going on certain grounds. Ought not more credit to be given to a whole aſſembly, whoſe members are not only judges of the affair, but have alſo maturely weighed all the arguments pro and con, than to a few individuals, who judge partially of things? Theſe are the inferences of the undiſcerning multitude, when Satan ſtrikes a blow at the kingdom of Chriſt. But the ever-glorious Son of God ſuffered himſelf to be ſentenced to death by this auguſt and venerable aſſembly, that he might expoſe and baffle theſe machinations of the Spirit of darkneſs, which he carries on by means of the outward pomp, authority, and dignity of men. For who will now be dazzled by power, titles, and high ſtation, ſo as to acquieſce in the decrees of men, when the moſt innocent perſon that ever appeared in the world has been condemned

demned to die as a blaſphemer, by the unanimous voice of a very reſpectable and learned aſſembly of lay men and eccleſiaſtics. Such were the perſons who incurred the guilt of this iniquitous ſentence.

We ſhall now conſider, in the next place, the unjuſt proceeding itſelf. Here is indeed an appearance, as if every thing was tranſacted in a regular, juſt, and legal manner: for the method preſcribed by the Law of Moſes is obſerved in the trial, and, conformably to that law, witneſſes are heard. Moreover, though the law required but two or three witneſſes for pronouncing ſentence of death on a perſon convicted of capital crimes, againſt which ſuch a puniſhment was denounced (*b*), they went beyond this injunction, and produced multitudes of witneſſes, who accuſed the holy Jeſus, the Son of God, of the moſt heinous crimes. But theſe witneſſes were the moſt abandoned of men, hardened againſt all ſenſe of ſhame. For ſome of their depoſitions were utterly falſe; and by others, they perverted the true and innocent meaning of the words of the Lord Jeſus, and maliciouſly put a criminal conſtruction upon them. In theſe proceedings we may obſerve a two-fold injuſtice.

As to the former, we ſhall take notice of the Means which this Council made uſe of; their drift in employing thoſe means, and laſtly the unſucceſsful iſſue of this contrivance.

(*b*) Deut. xvii. 6.

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1. As to the means, which the Council made uſe of in carrying on this flagrant injuſtice, we are informed, that 'the whole Council ſought 'falſe witneſs againſt Jeſus.' Undoubtedly they muſt either have bribed ſome profligate wretches to accuſe Jeſus of the worſt of crimes; or, others, in order to gain the favour of the members of the Council, (as it conduced to profit and preferment) voluntarily offered themſelves, to vent the moſt notorious falſities againſt the Lamb of God, and confirm them by a flagitious oath. Theſe falſe teſtimonies was probably to be reckoned in the claſs of neceſſary lies; the peace, and even the exiſtence, of the Jewiſh church depending on taking ſuch meaſures. Thoſe who ſuborned thoſe falſe witneſs, at the ſame time, were not ſparing of their aſſurances, that all this might be atoned for by a few ſin-offerings; and it is not improbable, that the High Prieſt himſelf promiſed theſe ſons of Belial to take the guilt on his conſcience, and be anſwerable for it before God. From ſuch preſumptuous beginnings, the Popiſh clergy have gradually infuſed a daring hardineſs into many thouſands of weak and timorous minds, and inſtigated them to the commiſſion of the moſt execrable ſins.

2. Their impious drift, in employing theſe means, was to put Jeſus to death. Their intent in hearing witneſſes, *&c.* was not to come at the truth, and acquit Jeſus if he ſhould be found innocent of the charge: On the contrary, they did it with a deſign of varniſhing

over

over that ſentence of death, which they had long before determined among themſelves to paſs on the innocent Jeſus, with an appearance of juſtice. It was their fixed reſolution, to rid themſelves of this troubleſom perſon, who by his frequent reproofs diſturbed their carnal tranquillity, laid open their hypocriſy, and expoſed their wicked artifices; inſomuch that they had ſuffered conſiderably in their credit and eſteem with the people, as well as in point of intereſt. But their real motives for removing Jeſus out of the way were, by all means, to be concealed from the people. For this purpoſe, witneſſes were to be ſuborned to ſwear all manner of crimes againſt Jeſus, that he might be put to death as a malefactor, who had forfeited his life, being convicted of hereſy and ſedition. Thus the huſbandmen of the vineyard were for delivering up to death the Lord Jeſus, who was heir of the vineyard, by the ſame contrivance as formerly was uſed againſt the innocent Naboth; who was put to death at the inſtigation of the impious Jezebel, who ſuborned two falſe witneſſes charging him with blaſpheming God, and ſpeaking treaſon againſt the King; and on this falſe information he was ſtoned (*c*).

3. Theſe means, which were contrived to effect ſo wicked an end, failed in the iſſue. Theſe wicked ſuborners of falſe witneſſes were utterly diſappointed: for it is ſaid, 'they found 'none,' *i. e.* they did not find ſufficient evidence, on which they might pronounce ſentence

(*c*) 1 Kings xxi. 13. Matt. xxi. 38, 39.

of

of death on the priſoner. Beſides, after ſeveral falſe witneſſes had given in their evidence on oath, it is added, 'their witneſs, or teſtimony, 'did not agree;' for one contradicted, or related in a quite different manner, what another ſaid before him. Thus God confounded the ſpeech of theſe witneſſes, as he did the language of the projectors of the tower of Babel, and expoſed the unrighteous judges to ſhame and contempt. At this, they ought to have reflected on their own injuſtice, and conſidered that God himſelf blaſted their deſigns, and thwarted their wicked purpoſes. But when this firſt attempt proved abortive, the Council proceeded to a ſecond contrivance, which is the other part of the two-fold injuſtice mentioned above.

As to the means made uſe of in this ſecond inſtance of injuſtice, it was the ſuborning of two witneſſes; whoſe depoſition conſiſted in wreſting and perverting the meaning of the innocent words ſpoken by our Saviour. We obſerve in the behaviour of theſe men, that they were hardened in vice, and that their teſtimony was falſe.

St. Mark informs us that 'there aroſe * certain, and bare falſe witneſs.' From theſe words ſome would infer, that theſe two falſe witneſſes were members of the Sanhedrim; who had hitherto kept their places, but now roſe up in order to make their depoſitions. Thus the High Prieſt is ſaid afterwards to ſtand up † from his ſeat, on which, till then, he had been ſitting. It

* αναστανται. † ανασταις.

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is farther ſaid by St. Matthew, 'At laſt came, *&c.* that is, they advanced into the middle of of the hall, in order to confront Jeſus. They likewiſe pretended to have heard with their own ears what they were depoſing, 'We heard 'him ſay;' and conſequently affirmed, that they were preſent when our bleſſed Lord ſpoke thoſe words, which they conſtrued into ſuch horrid blaſphemy.

Having given this inſtance of their effrontery, they proceed to their falſe evidence, 'We 'heard him ſay, I am able to [I will] deſtroy 'this temple of God, which is made with 'hands, and within three days I will build 'another, made without hands.' Theſe words allude to what Jeſus had ſaid in the beginning of his miniſtry; which was, conſequently, at leaſt three years before, when he drove thoſe who ſold oxen, ſheep, and doves, and the changers of money, out of the temple. What our bleſſed Lord then ſaid, as recorded by St. John (*d*), was this: 'Deſtroy this temple, and in 'three days I will raiſe it up.' Theſe words of the Lord Jeſus were moſt ſcandalouſly perverted by theſe perjured informers: For Jeſus therein propheſied of his approaching death, and ſubſequent reſurrection. He ſhews them, how the temple of his body, in which his Divinity dwelt, would be broken and pulled down by death; but that on the third day, by his almighty power, he would raiſe it up again, and reſtore the breathleſs corſe to life. But this

(*d*) John ii. 19.

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teſtimony concerning the words, which Jeſus had formerly ſpoken, was evidently falſe in the following particulars.

1. Our bleſſed Lord's words were, 'Deſtroy 'this temple:' But they pretended that they heard him ſay, 'I will deſtroy this temple.'

2. The temple which Jeſus ſpoke of was that of his body; for, no doubt, he pointed with his finger to his breaſt when he ſaid, 'De-'ſtroy this temple.' But they make the words allude to the Jewiſh temple at Jeruſalem; which, at that time, had been magnificiently embelliſhed by the Herodian family.

3. As a further proof that Chriſt meant the temple at Jeruſalem, they add, 'that is made 'with hands;' words which never came out of our Saviour's mouth.

Laſtly, They falſly depoſe, that he ſaid he would build 'ANOTHER temple made with-'out hands.' On the contrary, our bleſſed Lord's words were 'I will raiſe it [the ſame temple 'which they ſhould demoliſh,] up in three days.

By thus perverting the words of the bleſſed Jeſus they fulfilled what the Meſſiah, in the perſon of David, complains of: 'Every 'day they wreſt, or maliciouſly pervert, my 'words (*e*).'

But this ſecond attempt to oppreſs the innocence of our bleſſed Lord ſucceeded no better than the former. We find that their teſtimonies agreed not together. For though they were only two witneſſes, yet, we may pre-

(*e*) Pſalm lvi. 5.

ſume, that as they were heard ſeparately, they probably differed from each other in the circumſtances of place, time, *&c.*

The deſign of theſe falſe witneſſes was evidently wicked and malicious. They intended, in the firſt place, to repreſent Jeſus as a vainglorious boaſter, who, from an abſurd pride, would undertake things beyond the power of man to effect: Thus the Jews had before reproached Chriſt, ſaying, 'Forty and ſix years 'was this temple in building, and wilt thou 'rear it up in three days (*f*)?' But this was not all: By this accuſation they charged him with a much greater crime. They would repreſent him as an enemy to the whole Jewiſh nation, whereſoever diſperſed; ſince they all acknowledged the temple at Jeruſalem as the only place appointed for the public worſhip of God, and three times a year repaired thither from all parts of the world, to pay their vows to the Lord, to acknowledge their ſins, and to pour forth their ſupplications before God; all which devout uſages would at once be at an end, if this threatening to deſtroy the temple were put in execution. They made him likewiſe, by this aſſertion, an enemy to the Jewiſh prieſthood, who ſerved by courſes in the courts and ſanctuary, burnt and offered incenſe, by ſprinkling the blood purified the people of Iſrael, bleſſed them, and inſtructed them in the Divine Law. Laſtly, They deſigned by this accuſation to repreſent our bleſſed Lord as a ſworn enemy to the God

(*f*) John xi. 20.

of

of Iſrael, who dwelt in the Holy of Holies, or the moſt ſacred part of the temple, and whoſe Majeſty was inſulted by this menace to deſtroy that ſacred edifice. In order to make the charge clearer, they call the temple, which Jeſus threatened to deſtroy, the temple of God; by which addition they would inſinuate, that the affront was levelled at the God of Iſrael himſelf, whoſe Majeſty was inſulted by ſpeaking contemptuouſly of his temple. It is not without deſign that theſe falſe witneſſes ſubjoined, that he had farther the boldneſs to ſay, he would build another, after he had deſtroyed the Jewiſh temple. This contains a malignant charge, that Jeſus had formed a ſcheme to abrogate the temple-worſhip which had been preſcribed by God himſelf, and introduce an idolatrous religion of his own invention. For, as theſe blind ſlanderers knew nothing of the worſhip of God according to the new Covenant, which, it is true, the Son of God was to introduce; they could think of no other than ſome idolatrous worſhip which was to ſuperſede the former that was of Divine inſtitution, as this new temple was to be erected on the ruins of the other. Such an accumulation of the worſt of crimes is comprehended in the depoſition of theſe falſe witneſſes! However, all the effect of theſe calumnies and miſconſtructions was prevented; for the witneſſes did not agree. At this the judges were extremely perplexed, ſeeing that the innocence of Jeſus, by its unſullied luſtre, broke through the thick clouds of lies and

calumnies. Hence the following doctrines may be deduced.

1. The accuſation of our bleſſed Saviour, by falſe witneſſes, ought to be looked upon as a conſiderable part of his ſufferings. All theſe perſons, by whom the bleſſed Jeſus ſaw himſelf ſurrounded, were ſo many engines of the devil, the father of lies. This unclean ſpirit had taken poſſeſſion of the hearts of the judges and the witneſſes, and inſtigated the former to condemn him, and the latter to oppreſs his innocence by falſe teſtimonies. Satan's only aim in this was, to fix a blemiſh on the perſon and doctrine of Chriſt, and to diſturb the minds of thoſe who believed in him. Thus, theſe witeſſes were one of the things which the infernal ſerpent was to employ againſt the bleſſed Seed of the woman. For that our bleſſed Saviour was not unconcerned at theſe grievous accuſations, but that he had a very painful feeling of them, is evident from his bitter lamentations, long before uttered in the Pſalms by the mouth of David, in theſe words: 'Falſe witneſſes did riſe up: They laid to my 'charge things that I knew not; the mouth 'of the wicked, and the mouth of the deceitful, 'are opened againſt me; they have ſpoken 'againſt me with a lying tongue (*g*).' But what affected his ſoul more than all the reſt, was the horrid profanation of the name of the ſacred God in the oath taken by theſe two perjured wretches, who ſware that they would deliver nothing but the real truth; whereas

(*g*) Pſ. xxxv. 11. cix. 2.

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'the poiſon of adders was under their lips.' If St. Paul reckons among the ſufferings of Chriſt the contradictions of ſinners (*b*), how much more offenſive muſt theſe falſe witneſſes have been to him, which the father of lies employed as his moſt venomous arrows. In order to atone for our perjury, lying, and falſhood, the Son of God was to ſuffer a whole hoſt of falſe and profligate witneſſes thus to riſe up againſt him. But this tranſcendent merit of Chriſt belongs to none but true penitents, who are troubled and afflicted, who mourn and weep for the many grievous ſins they are conſcious of; who, on account of their falſe teſtimony, their inadvertent perjuries, their raſh and profane ſwearing, know not how to bear the inſupportable burden of ſin, and have now an utter abhorrence of all theſe works of Satan. To theſe, I ſay, this meritorious ſuffering of the bleſſed Jeſus is an open city of refuge, where they ſhall find ſafety from the purſuits of the avenger of blood.

2. Never did the innocence of the bleſſed Jeſus ſhine with greater luſtre, than when the lying Spirit uſed his utmoſt efforts in obſcuring it. In this inſtance, God confounded ſome of the enemies of Chriſt by the means of others, and ſo perplexed the falſe witneſſes, that, quite contrary to their intentions, they bore teſtimony to our Saviour's innocence. St. Matthew informs us, that though many falſe witneſſes preſented themſelves, yet out of them all, not any two

(*b*) Heb. xii. 3.

agreed in their depoſitions. For if only two witneſſes who agreed in their evidence, could have been procured, ſentence would have immediately been paſſed, according to the law of Moſes, which ſays, 'At the mouth of two or three 'witneſſes, ſhall the matter be eſtabliſhed (*i*).' Thus the very contrivances put in practice by Satan, for oppreſſing the innocence of Jeſus, were ſo over-ruled by the wonderful Providence of God, that they ſerved the more to diſplay his innocence, and conſequently to bring a greater confuſion on Satan's inſtruments. Unqueſtionably the Son of God ſaw the hand of his heavenly Father in this proceeding, which was a powerful conſolation to him at this juncture, and animated him to enter on his ſufferings with the greater reſignation and chearfulneſs. Such an High Prieſt of unſullied innocence, and perfect holineſs, in whom no guilt could be found, did our caſe require. The innocence of our Mediator, thus breaking through all falſe charges, like the ſun through the clouds and vapours, muſt be our ſhield againſt the juſt accuſations of the Law and our own conſciences. Alas! with what a croud of witneſſes does a ſinner find himſelf ſurrounded; when, before the judgment ſeat of God, he is accuſed by the Law of having offended the Divine Majeſty, and wilfully tranſgreſſed his Commandments; of having hated God, injured his neighbour, and polluted his body, which ought to have been the temple of God? Heaven and earth, and all the

(*i*) Deut. xix. 15.

creatures

creatures whom he has abuſed, by applying them to his wicked purpoſes, will then witneſs againſt him. The places where he committed his abominations, and ſinned either alone or in concert with others, will witneſs againſt him: 'For the ſtone ſhall cry out of the wall, and the 'beam out of the timber ſhall anſwer it (*k*).' The very members of his body, which he yielded as inſtruments of unrighteouſneſs, will reproach him for his ſins. Then the ſinner may ſay from fatal experience, 'Thou reneweſt thy witneſſes 'againſt me, and increaſeſt thine indignation 'upon me (*l*). Then it is, that he firſt learns to place a due value on the innocence of Chriſt, which was ſo virulently aſſailed by falſe witneſſes; then he firſt comes to the knowledge of the tranſcendent benefit of his meritorious ſufferings; and finds that behind this ſhield only, we can be ſafe from the accuſations of the Law, corroborated by the teſtimonies of ſo many witneſſes. If our benign Mediator interpoſes; if he invalidates the accuſations, by offering to pay our ranſom; if he ſays to his heavenly Father, 'De-'liver him from going down to the pit; I have 'found a ranſom (*m*); then the ſinner, who already felt the ſentence of death in his conſcience, is raiſed to hopes of life and immortality; and by faith triumphing over the terrors of death, may cry out with a holy confidence, "Who ſhall lay any thing to my charge? It is "God that juſtifieth. Who ſhall condemn me? "It is Chriſt who, after being unjuſtly ſen-

(*k*) Habac. ii. 11. (*l*) Job. x. 17. (*m*) Job xxxiii. 24.

" tenced to be crucified, died and roſe again, " and now ſitteth at the right hand of God, and " alſo maketh interceſſion for me (*n*)." Such is the proper and ſalutary uſe which we ought to make of this circumſtance in our Saviour's ſufferings.

In the ſame manner, when by following Chriſt we are brought before magiſtrates for the truth's ſake, and there accuſed by falſe witneſſes who join in charging us with crimes, of which we know ourſelves to be entirely guiltleſs; we may put our truſt, and take comfort, in his innocence. Not only Stephen, the firſt martyr after Chriſt's death, but many other undaunted profeſſors of his religion have been made like unto their illuſtrious Head in this particular. This diabolical expedient, the Pagans made uſe of in perſecuting Chriſtians; and by bribing and ſuborning notorious proſtitutes, or by menacing them with the ſevereſt torture, prevailed on them to appear in court and depoſe, That they had been Chriſtians, and frequented the Chriſtian aſſemblies, where they had ſeen with their own eyes the debaucheries committed there. Theſe falſe depoſitions were immediately entered on record, and copies of them were diſperſed through the Empire, to raiſe an abhorrence of the Chriſtians in the breaſts of the ignorant and well-diſpoſed *. In the perſecutions raiſed by the Pope's adherents againſt the profeſſors of the truth, what atrocious accuſations have been likewiſe brought

(*n*) Rom. viii 33, 34.
* Vide EUSEBII Hiſt. Eccl. Lib. ix. C. 5.

againſt

againſt the innocent, which were ſupported by multitudes of ſuborned witneſſes? In ſuch dreadful conjunctures, what an enlivening comfort, what a happy encouragement is it to a member of Chriſt to reflect, that the moſt illuſtrious Captain of his ſalvation was likewiſe enured to this kind of ſuffering, and has obtained ſufficient ſtrength for him to come off as conqueror?

II.

In conſidering the behaviour of the bleſſed Jeſus, during the iniquitous proceedings of the Jewiſh Sanhedrim, or Spiritual Court, we ſhall obſerve,

Firſt, The queſtion put by the High Prieſt.

Secondly, The ſilence of our bleſſed Lord on that occaſion.

As for the High Prieſt's queſtion, it is ſaid, 'Then the High Prieſt ſtood.' He aroſe from his ſeat full of perturbation, wrath, and pretended zeal; his whole mind being violently agitated: and as he now deſpaired of procuring a ſufficient foundation for convicting Jeſus of any capital crime by the depoſition of witneſſes, he turned his thoughts on extorting ſomething from our Saviour's own mouth, in order to condemn him. He therefore aſked him with great emotion, 'Anſwereſt thou nothing to what theſe 'witneſs againſt thee?' By this means, he hoped to induce Jeſus to anſwer to theſe depoſitions; and either to deny them, or acknowledge himſelf guilty of the charge. He concluded, that it behoved our bleſſed Saviour to explain himſelf

on this head; eſpecially as he was accuſed of open blaſphemy againſt the temple and worſhip of God. It was the duty of the High Prieſt to charge it home to the conſciences of theſe perjured witneſſes, and to puniſh them agreeably to the Divine Law: 'If a falſe witneſs riſe up 'againſt any man, to teſtify againſt him that 'which is wrong; the Judges ſhall make dili-'gent inquiſition; and behold, if the witneſs 'be a falſe witneſs, and hath teſtified falſely 'againſt his brother; then ſhall ye do unto 'him, as he had thought to have done to his 'brother: So ſhalt thou put the evil away from 'among you. Thine eye ſhall not pity (*o*).' On the contrary, the High Prieſt countenances and protects thoſe witneſſes who had depoſed ſuch notorious falſities againſt our bleſſed Lord, and by his authority ſupports their groundleſs evidence, as if it had contained accuſations worthy of an anſwer from the accuſed.

Secondly, Upon this, the Lord Jeſus was ſilent; 'But Jeſus held his peace, and anſwered 'nothing.' Indeed, the witneſſes were convinced in their own conſciences, that all their depoſitions put together were but of little weight, and that they could afford nothing to ground a ſentence of death upon. As theſe lying teſtimonies carried their own confutation with them, and one falſe witneſs, by his contradiction, invalidated the depoſitions of another; the Divine Wiſdom, who well knew when to ſpeak and when to be ſilent, did not think there was

(*o*) Deut. xix. 16, 18, 19.

any

any occaſion for him to open his mouth, in order to vindicate his innocence. Thus, his not anſwering at all implied a ſufficient anſwer to theſe incoherent evidences. Beſides, they deſerved no anſwer; for they had already judged Chriſt in their hearts, and ſuborned theſe witneſſes merely for a ſhow, or rather a mockery, of juſtice. They had before allowed one of the Officers of the court to ſtrike Jeſus on the face, when he deſired that he might be legally convicted by witneſſes. He therefore, as it were, wraps himſelf up in ſilence; recommends the affair to his heavenly Father; and, with a ſerene, tranquil mind, patiently waits the iſſue. As his unrighteous judges had unknowingly fulfilled what had been predicted by the Spirit of prophecy concerning the ſubornation of falſe witneſſes againſt the Meſſiah; ſo now the Lord Jeſus deſignedly accompliſhes what had been foretold by the prophet concerning the Meſſiah's ſilence on that occaſion, *viz.* 'As a ſheep 'before his ſhearers is dumb, ſo he opened not 'his mouth (*p*).' Hence we may learn the following truths.

1. A perſon, whoſe mind is diſturbed by any vehement paſſion, is of all others the moſt unfit for enquiring after truth. We have obſerved above, that the High Prieſt's riſing up from his ſeat was the effect of the agitation of his mind, which did not allow him to ſit down calmly during the trial; yet this Head of the Jewiſh clergy would fain arrogate to himſelf the honour

(*p*) Iſa. liii. 7.

of

of diſcovering the truth, as if it depended ſolely on him; whereas, under this perturbation of mind, he was as unfit for it, as a blind man is to judge of colours. This wretched judge was a true repreſentation of thoſe learned men, who are actuated by the paſſions of ambition, hatred, anger, *&c.* and yet would be eſteemed oracles, whoſe words are the ſtandard of truth; who, as Judges, ſit on the bench, though they are ſo blinded by his paſſion, that they are unable to diſcern either truth from error, or innocence from guilt; who, as Divines, ſet up to expound the holy Scriptures, and would fain be accounted champions for the pure doctrines of Chriſtianity, and yet, from their intemperate zeal, foam and rage more like irrational beaſts, than ſpeak and write as it becometh rational creatures; who, as Philoſophers, diſcover new truths, and would be thought promoters of ſcience and virtue, and yet are wretched ſlaves to their humours and paſſions.

2. We ſhould never venture on a crime, truſting to a lye: For a lye will confute itſelf. It is without connection, and built on a ſandy foundation. Therefore, whatever evil is ſpoken of us by others, if it be falſe, let it never diſturb our peace. It is the language of pride, indeed, to object, How! ſhall I ſuffer ſuch calumny? What will the world think of me? Would it not be ſaid, that my ſilence is a confeſſion of my guilt? Who knows what prejudice it may do my character? But the meek followers of the mild and lowly Jeſus, though they know, that

in

in matters which concern the honour of God, and the Order inſtituted by him, diſcreet apologies and vindications of the innocent are not prohibited, yet they have alſo learned to forego their own honour, and in ſilence and ſuffering to imitate the Lamb of God, who opened not his mouth. Therefore, when lies and calumnies are ſo notorious and palpable, as to carry their own confutation with them, they chooſe rather to be ſilent, to recommend their cauſe to God, and patiently to wait for his aid; and, in the mean time, walk on undaunted in their innocence and integrity. They likewiſe find, that this is the beſt way to overcome envy, malice, and ſlander; for the fire quickly dies away without the addition of fuel to foment it. It is the true Chriſtian's conſtant maxim in ſuch circumſtances: 'I will be dumb, and will not 'open my mouth, becauſe it is thy doing (*q*)'.

THE PRAYER.

O Moſt merciful and gracious Father! praiſed be thy glorious name, for bringing to light and publicly manifeſting the innocence of thy beloved Son, by the contradictory depoſitions of his enemies; and for applying his ſpotleſs perfection to us as our own, that it may be our defence and ſhield againſt the accuſation of Satan, and our awakened conſciences. Bring us to the knowledge and confeſſion of our depravity. Convince us of our guilt, that we may

(*q*) Pſ. xxxix. 9.

ceaſe

ceaſe from juſtifying ourſelves at thy Tribunal, and ſeek protection under the ſhadow of our ſinleſs Mediator's wings. May his innocence be our ſhield and refuge at the hour of death, when the enemy will not fail bitterly to accuſe us, to raiſe up falſe witneſſes againſt us, and to place before our eyes all the wickedneſs, which we have actually committed during the whole courſe of our lives: Then ſprinkle our conſciences with the propitiating blood of our Lord and Saviour, ſo that our accuſer may be utterly confounded, and we may depart hence ſecure of thy favour, and full of a lively hope of eternal felicity. Grant this, O Lord, for the ſake of the innocence of thy beloved Son, Jeſus Chriſt. Amen.

CONSIDERATION VIII.

The good confeſſion of the Lord Jeſus before the Sanhedrim, *or* Spiritual Court *of the* Jews.

'(a) AGAIN, the High Prieſt aſked Jeſus, 'Art thou the Chriſt, the Son of the 'Bleſſed? I adjure thee by the living God, that 'thou tell us, whether thou be the Chriſt, the 'Son of God? Jeſus ſaith unto him, Thou haſt 'ſaid; I am. Nevertheleſs, I ſay unto you, 'Hereafter ye ſhall ſee the Son of Man, ſitting 'on the right hand of Power, and coming in 'the clouds of heaven.'

(a) Matth. xxvi. 63, 64. Mark. xiv. 61, 62.

In theſe words, we have an account of the good confeſſion of our bleſſed Lord before the Jewiſh Sanhedrim, or Spiritual court, which ſeems to have been the cauſe of the ſubſequent ſentence that was paſſed on him. We may here obſerve,

Firſt, The cauſe and occaſion of this confeſſion.

Secondly, The confeſſion itſelf.

I.

The behaviour of the High Prieſt was the occaſion of this good confeſſion. We may be ſure that this inveterate enemy of Chriſt was exaſperated beyond all patience, when not only his ſuborning witneſſes proved abortive, but alſo his new expedient of drawing ſomething from the mouth of the party accuſed was quite fruſtrated, by the entire ſilence of our bleſſed Saviour. He therefore goes another way to work, and begins to talk to the priſoner in a higher and more reſolute tone of voice. He accoſts our bleſſed Lord with a queſtion; to which he adds a ſolemn adjuration to confeſs the truth.

The High Prieſt's queſtion is thus related by St. Mark: 'Again, the High Prieſt aſked him, 'and ſaid unto him, Art thou the Chriſt the 'Son of the Bleſſed?' The word Again alludes to ſomething that had paſſed before. For the falſe witneſſes being ſucceſſively heard, and the High Prieſt being alſo convinced that, from all their depoſitions, he could not collect a ſufficient proof to convict our bleſſed Saviour of any capital crime; he endeavours to get from his own mouth

mouth ſomething on which he might form a charge. With this deſign, the High Prieſt aſks this queſtion, 'Anſwereſt thou nothing, what 'is it that theſe witneſs againſt thee?' But Jeſus, who ſaw into the malicious artifice of his judge, would not be induced by this inſidious queſtion to break his ſilence; but at the ſame time, by making no reply, gave him to underſtand, that the accuſations of the falſe witneſſes did not deſerve any anſwer, as they ſufficiently confuted one another.

This ſtratagem of the High Prieſt being thus baffled, he accoſts the bleſſed Jeſus with another, and indeed a double queſtion; which was immediately followed by a plain and direct anſwer. He firſt aſks, 'Art thou the Chriſt?' *i. e.* doſt thou publicly own thyſelf to be that Meſſiah, whom God promiſed by his ſervant Moſes and the Prophets, and whoſe coming has hitherto been expected by the Jewiſh church? His ſecond queſtion is, 'Art thou the 'Son of the Bleſſed?' *i. e.* doſt thou pretend to be a perſon of the ſame eſſence with the bleſſed God, and ſtanding in ſuch near relation to him as that of a ſon to a father? Theſe Jewiſh Doctors knew, that God, in the writings of the Old Teſtament, had made mention of his Son. They were well acquainted with that paſſage in the Pſalms, *viz.* 'Thou art my Son, 'this day have I begotten thee (*b*).' They knew, that it is farther ſaid in the ſame Divine writings, 'He ſhall cry unto me, Thou art my

(*b*) Pſ. ii. 7.

'Father;

'Father: Alſo I will make him my Firſt-'born (*c*).' All this, I ſay, they very well knew, being perſons who were well acquainted with the Old Teſtament (*d*). They likewiſe very well remembered, that Jeſus had given himſelf out to be the Son of God. For, on reſtoring ſight to the blind man, he asked him this queſtion: 'Doſt thou believe on the Son of 'God? And when the man demanded, 'Who 'is he, Lord, that I may believe on him? Jeſus replied, 'It is he that talketh with 'thee (*e*).' They were alſo ſenſible, that he had publicly ſaid, 'I and my Father are one (*f*).' Accordingly, they had endeavoured to apprehend him when he ſpoke thoſe words; but he eſcaped from them, becauſe his hour was not then come. As the Rulers had Jeſus now in their power, the High Prieſt again brings on the carpet this critical point, which had given them ſo much offence; and he is for making the experiment, whether our bleſſed Lord will acknowledge himſelf to be the Meſſiah meant in the above-mentioned paſſages of the Old Teſtament, and the Son of God, as he had often pretended that he was. Happy would it have been for him, if this queſtion had proceeded from a well-diſpoſed heart, a ſincere love of truth, and a deſire of believing in Jeſus if he ſhould appear to be that Divine perſon! But this was an enſnaring queſtion, and deſigned only to draw a confeſſion from our bleſſed Saviour, in order to accuſe him of blaſphemy.

(*c*) Pſ. lxxxix. 26, 27. (*d*) Matth. ii. 5. 6.
(*e*) John ix. 35, 36 37. (*f*) John x. 30.

The chief Prieſts, &c, had long ſince paſt a decree, that if any man ſhould confeſs that he was Chriſt, or the Meſſiah, he ſhould be put out of the ſynagogue (*g*); and had more than once threatened to ſtone him, for pretending to be the Son of God (*h*). Thus it was from an hypocritical, blood-thirſty heart, that this queſtion proceeded; it was deſigned to pave the way for accuſing our bleſſed Saviour of blaſphemy, that they might pronounce the ſentence of death, on which they long before reſolved, on the Prince of Life.

But this enſnaring queſtion is likewiſe followed by an hypocritical adjuration; for the High Prieſt, according to St. Matthew's account, ſubjoins, 'I adjure thee by the living God, that 'thou tell us, whether thou be the Chriſt, the 'Son of God?' The High Prieſt, probably, apprehended, that the priſoner would on this occaſion likewiſe obſerve the ſame cautious ſilence as before, that no handle might be made of his words. He therefore now tried, by a feigned emotion, to touch his conſcience, and to bring as it were to the touchſtone of a ſolemn adjuration, and force him to a confeſſion. The High Prieſt's meaning was this: "If thou haſt "any regard for the favour of God, I ſolemnly "require of thee, that, without any equivo- "cation, thou will return a direct anſwer to the "queſtion propoſed to thee; and plainly de- "clare, whether thou wouldeſt be accounted "the Meſſiah, and the Son God? For what-

(*g*) John ix. 22. (*h*) John viii. 54, 59. x. 30, 31.

'ever

" ever thou ſhalt anſwer to this queſtion will " be admitted in this high Court, as if it was " delivered upon oath." By adjuring our bleſſed Saviour by the Living God, the deſign of the High Prieſt was to ſhew that he meant the God of Iſrael, leſt the priſoner ſhould, by a mental evaſion, ſwear by any idol or ſtrange god, and therefore think himſelf at liberty to deny the truth without incurring the guilt of perjury. This unjuſt judge had ſpread his net ſo artfully, that he was ſure of enſnaring the bleſſed Jeſus, whether he anſwered him in the affirmative, or in the negative.

II.

Our bleſſed Saviour's good confeſſion before the High Prieſt is contained in theſe words: 'Thou haſt ſaid; I am. Nevertheleſs, I ſay 'unto you, hereafter ſhall ye ſee the Son of 'Man ſitting on the right hand of Power, and 'coming in the clouds of heaven.'

The Lord Jeſus being adjured by the ſacred name of his heavenly Father; the reverence which he bore to it would not permit him to be any longer ſilent; ſo that he now opened his mouth, and gave a ſatisfactory anſwer to the High Prieſt's queſtion. This anſwer of our bleſſed Lord includes,

Firſt, A plain and unreſerved confeſſion.

Secondly, A farther illuſtration and confirmation of it.

Firſt, The confeſſion is made in theſe words, 'Thou haſt ſaid.' We read that our bleſſed Saviour made the ſame anſwer to his enemies on two

different occaſions, during the courſe of his ſufferings. The firſt was before the Sanhedrim in the inſtance before us, when he was aſked, Whether he was the Meſſiah, the Son of God; which anſwer he repeated (*k*) the next morning, when this queſtion was again put to him. The ſecond time was before the civil tribunal; for when Pilate aſked him, whether he was the King of the Jews, he likewiſe made this anſwer, 'Thou ſayeſt (*l*).' The import of theſe words 'Thou ſayeſt,' is as if our bleſſed Lord had ſaid, Yes, it is as thou ſayeſt. Hence St. Mark (*m*) expreſſes it thus, 'I am;' *i. e.* I am the Meſſiah, foretold and deſcribed by the Prophets, and whom they have deſcribed as a King, a High Prieſt, and a Prophet: I am the eſſential Son of the bleſſed God.

But this manner of expreſſion is ſtill more emphatical; for it is the ſame as if our bleſſed Saviour had ſaid, I am the Chriſt, or Meſſiah, and the Son of God, in the very ſenſe you make uſe of theſe words in your queſtion. Now, the idea which the High Prieſt and the Jewiſh church at that time annexed to this high title The Son of God, was perfectly juſt; for it included an equality with God; ſo that he who declared himſelf to be the Son of God made himſelf equal with God in honour, majeſty, and eſſential perfections. This is evident from the following paſſages in St. John's Goſpel: 'Therefore the Jews ſought the more to kill him,

(*k*) Luke xxii. 70. (*l*) Matt. xxvii. 11.
(*m*) Chap. xiv. 62.

not

'not only becauſe he had broken the ſabbath, 'but ſaid alſo that God was his father, making 'himſelf equal with God (*n*).' And again, 'The Jews anſwered him, ſaying, for a good 'work we ſtone thee not; but for blaſphemy, 'and becauſe that thou, being a man, makeſt 'thy ſelf God (*o*):' Namely, becauſe Jeſus had ſaid, I am the Son of God (*p*)' *. The High Prieſt, therefore, by aſking Jeſus whether he was the Son of God, was deſirous to know, whether he gave himſelf out to be a ſon of God that was equal to the God of Iſrael in all eſſential perfections, and had, in common with him, every Divine Attribute, and conſequently was to be adored and worſhipped in the ſame manner as the God of Iſrael.

Upon this, our bleſſed Saviour anſwered, 'Thou haſt ſaid.' *i. e.* I do acknowledge myſelf to be the Son of God; and this not in that low ſenſe in which all believers are termed ſons of God, but in that exalted ſenſe which is ſignified by this title in your queſtion. Now, this is an invariable maxim in truth and probity, That a judicial queſtion muſt be anſwered in the very ſenſe in which the magiſtrate takes it; otherwiſe the party interrogated deceives the judge by ambiguous words; a pitiful evaſion which any man of honeſty and integrity would ſcorn to make uſe of. Therefore it were un-

(*n*) Chap. v. 18. (*o*) Chap. x. 33. (*p*) Ibid verſe 36. and xix. 7.

* *Judæos illius temporis hanc ideam cum titulo filii Dei conjunxiſſe, pluribus probat* THEODORE DE BLANC in Principes contre les Sociniens, Tom. II. p. 108. & ſeq. 127 & ſeq.

juſt and ſinful to imagine, that our bleſſed Saviour, who was the true and faithful Witneſs, deviated from this ſtreight path, and had recourſe to mean ſubterfuges on ſo ſolemn an occaſion. Beſider, it evidently appears that the High Prieſt actually took Chriſt's anſwer in this ſenſe, *viz.* that he was not merely a nominal Son of God as all faithful Iſraelites were, but eſſentially the Son of God and equal with his Father, from his behaviour as ſoon as he heard our Saviour's anſwer. For he rent his clothes, and cried out, as it were, in phrenzy, 'He hath ſpoken blaſphemy: what farther need have we of witneſſes?' With this we may compare another paſſage (*q*), where our bleſſed Saviour was before accuſed of blaſphemy on the ſame grounds, namely, for having declared himſelf the Son of God. Hence it inconteſtably appears, that the High Prieſt from this confeſſion concluded, that Jeſus, whom he looked on as a mere man, arrogated to himſelf, under the title of the Son of God, the Divine Eſſence, and exalted himſelf in idea to the Throne of God. Therefore this confeſſion of the Lord Jeſus is particularly remarkable, as, on one ſide, it darts a thunderbolt which roots up Socinianiſm from its very foundation; and, on the other hand, corroborates our faith, which acknowledges Jeſus of Nazareth, who by the ſentence of the Jewiſh Sanhedrim was crucified, to be the eſſential Son of God, whom all created Beings are bound to honour as they do the Father.

(*q*) John x. 36.

Secondly,

Secondly, To this good confeſſion, the Lord Jeſus further adds an illuſtration and confirmation of it, in order, not only to place his words in a clear light, and ſet their true and genuine ſenſe out of all queſtion, but likewiſe to confirm his Divine Sonſhip by irrefragable proofs. For undoubtedly it muſt have appeared to the High Prieſt as the height of extravagance, for a poor criminal, who ſtood before him, to pretend to be not only the Meſſiah and the King of Iſrael, but alſo the Son of God. Hence our bleſſed Lord confirms this truth by the two following proofs.

The firſt is from his ſitting at the right hand of God, and is contained in theſe words, 'Hereafter ſhall ye ſee the Son of Man ſitting 'on the right hand of Power.' Here Jeſus refers his judge to the book of Pſalms (*r*), 'The Lord ſaid unto my Lord, ſit thou at my 'right hand.' This is here termed by our Lord 'the right hand of Power;' as the Scripture attributes an infinite power or Omnipotence to the hand of God. The Supreme Being is frequently repreſented, in the Old Teſtament, ſitting on a lofty Throne, and, as a King, ruling over all (*s*). Now when Jeſus ſays he ſhall ſit at the right hand of God, this can mean nothing elſe but that he ſhall reign jointly with his Almighty Father; and have a ſhare in the accompliſhment of his decrees, the oeconomy of his government, and the conqueſt of his enemies. He was to ſit at the right hand of Power;

(*r*) Pſ. cx. 1. (*s*) 2 Chron. xviii, 18. Iſa. vi. 1. Pſ. xcix. 1.

or, as St. Matthew expreſſes it (*t*), 'to Him 'all power was to be given in heaven and on 'earth.'

The ſecond proof is taken from his returning in the clouds; for our bleſſed Lord adds, 'And 'coming in the clouds of heaven.' Here he refers his Judge to this paſſage in the prophet Daniel (*u*): 'I ſaw in the night viſions, and be-'hold, one like the Son of Man came with the 'clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of 'Days, and they brought him near before him. 'And there was given him dominion, and glory, 'and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and 'languages ſhould ſerve him.' The clouds of heaven are repreſented in Scripture as God's chariot, on which he conveys himſelf with incredible ſwiftneſs wherever he intends to diſplay his glory, either in puniſhments and viſitations, or in rewards, and acts of benevolence. Hence it is ſaid in the Pſalms (*x*) 'He maketh the clouds 'his chariot, and walketh upon the wings of 'the wind. Behold, the Lord rideth on a 'ſwift cloud, and ſhall come unto Egypt,' ſaith the prophet (*y*). God permits no created Being to uſe theſe majeſtic chariots, reſerving them particularly to himſelf. Now the Son of Man, by appropriating to himſelf theſe chariots, and aſſuring the Jews that he ſhould hereafter be ſeen coming in the clouds of heaven, gives them to underſtand, that he is the Son of God in ſuch

(*t*) Chap. xxviii. 18. (*u*) Chap. vii. 13, 14.
(*x*) Pſalm civ. 3. (*y*) Iſa. xix. 1.

a ſenſe, as in honour and dignity to be equal to his Father.

But when our bleſſed Saviour here ſpeaks of coming in the clouds of heaven, he does not allude to his triumphant aſcenſion thither, when he was taken up in a white effulgent cloud, and carried to God's throne. But he ſpeaks of his coming forth from the Father, to manifeſt his great glory. Nor does he ſpeak only * of his coming to the laſt judgment, when his glory will be diſplayed in the moſt conſpicuous manner, and when he ſhall judge and condemn thoſe who have impiouſly condemned him. He rather means here his coming on various occaſions, from the time of his exaltation to the right hand of God, until the end of the world; and eſpecially his coming to enlarge his kingdom, and aboliſh the Jewiſh polity. Of this coming he even ſpeaks as an event, which ſome of his hearers would live to ſee (z). Therefore the meaning of theſe words of our bleſſed Saviour is this: I ſtand, indeed, at preſent before your tribunal like an accuſed malefactor, and my Divinity muſt ſubmit to anſwer your preſumptuous queries; but in a ſhort time, even in this my debaſed, vilified human nature, will I ſit on the throne of God; will take in hand the government of my church, ſend down my

* I have here added the word *only*; for our Saviour plainly alludes primarily to his coming to judge the world, though his words may alſo refer to the viſitations mentioned by the Author. Indeed the deſtruction of Jeruſalem, and the end of the world, are in a manner interwoven together in the Goſpel. *W.*

(z) Matt. xvi. 28. Luke ix. 27.

Holy Spirit, extend my kingdom over the whole world, and execute on your devoted city and church, thoſe judgments, which God has long ſince determined to pour upon them.

In this illuſtration and confirmation of our Saviour's confeſſion, three particulars are farther to be obſerved.

1. That he does not here call himſelf the Son of Man out of mere humility, as if the title of the Son of God did not of right belong to him in his ſtate of abaſement, and he was not to aſſume it till after his exaltation. On the contrary, Jeſus here directs the attention of his judge to the myſtery of his perſon, by aſſuring him that the abaſed Son of Man, who now ſtood bound before him, was likewiſe the real Son of God. Thus Peter, though at preſent he denied the Lord Jeſus time after time, formerly made a glorious confeſſion of his dignity. For when Chriſt aſked that Apoſtle, ſaying, 'Whom do men ſay that I, the Son of Man, 'am?' Peter anſwered, 'Thou art Chriſt the 'Son of the living God (*a*);' and ſuch the Mediator betwixt God and Man muſt be. He muſt be man, that he may be capable of ſuffering; and God, in order to impart an infinite value to his ſufferings: He muſt be man to humble himſelf down to the earth, and God to raiſe us up to heaven; man, that he may repreſent mankind, and ſtand in their ſtead; and God, that he may reconcile and propitiate the

(*a*) Matt, xvi. 13. 16.

juſtice

juſtice of God, by a proportionate ſatisfaction; But he muſt be God and man in one perſon, that he may unite God and man in one ſpirit.

2. It is to be obſerved that Jeſus ſays, that the Jews ſhould ſee him 'ſitting on the right 'hand of Power, and coming in the clouds 'of heaven.' In this paſſage Seeing ſignifies perception in general, or being ſenſible of a thing; as to ſee death (*b*) ſignifies to taſte of death, and feel its ſting. However, the Jews even with their bodily eyes ſaw the wonderful effects of the exaltation of Jeſus Chriſt; from which they might be abundantly convinced, that He whom they had ſentenced to death as a blaſphemer was ſitting on the Throne of God. They ſaw at the effuſion of the Holy Ghoſt on the day of Pentecoſt, lambent flames of fire, reſembling tongues, reſting on the heads of the Apoſtles. They ſaw with aſtoniſhment the boldneſs thence derived, with which the Apoſtles, now ſo timorous and faint-hearted, openly confeſſed Chriſt before the Council and civil power (*c*). They ſaw the many miracles which the Apoſtles wrought in the name of Jeſus, in confirmation of the teſtimony they bore to his reſurrection (*d*). They ſaw the great change wrought by the preaching of the Apoſtles in the minds and diſpoſitions of ſo many thouſands of Jews, and multitudes of Heathens, who were turned from idolatry to the God of Iſrael.

(*b*) John viii. 51. (*c*) Acts iv, 13, 30, 33.
(*d*) Acts v. 12, 15, 16.

They

They ſaw the Roman legions, and Imperial eagles, beſieging and deſtroying their holy city. Theſe were all viſible effects of Chriſt's exaltation to the right hand of God; from which they might evidently perceive, how tranſcendent muſt have been the dignity of the Perſon, whom they had injured and deſpiſed.

3. We may obſerve that the Lord Jeſus ſays, 'that they ſhould ſee theſe things hereafter.' In few days, the foundation for all theſe great events was to be laid. Even on the very day of our Saviour's Crucifixion, they ſaw ſuch aſtoniſhing phenomena as were never heard of before: for the ſun was obſcured, ſo that the noon-day was as dark as midnight; the veil of the temple was rent in twain; the earth trembled, the rocks rent, yawning graves caſt out their dead, and all Nature ſeemed affected. Theſe wonders ſo terrified even a Roman Centurion who attended the execution, as to extort from him this confeſſion: 'Truly this was 'the Son of God (*e*)'. Three days after this, they were informed of Chriſt's Reſurrection from the dead; forty days after that, they had an account of his Aſcenſion; and on the fiftieth day, they ſaw the effects of it in the miraculous effuſion of the Holy Ghoſt, and the public preaching of the Apoſtles in all languages. Thus from the very criſis of our Saviour's loweſt abaſement, his Divine Glory daily diſplayed itſelf more and more in a viſible and moſt ſurpriſing manner.

(*e*) Matt. xxvii. 54.

From

From this good confeſſion of our bleſſed Lord, let us, by way of concluſion, deduce the following inferences.

1. Truth ought to be confeſſed, though at the ſame time great inconveniencies, and even the loſs of life, were known to be the conſequence of it. This is the pattern ſet before us by Jeſus Chriſt, the chief of all Martyrs, and the Supreme Witneſs of truth. He was very ſenſible of the conſequences of this noble confeſſion, *viz.* that he ſhould be buffeted, mocked, and ſpurned; and that even the ſentence of death would be paſſed upon him. Nevertheleſs, he declares the truth; profeſſes that he is Chriſt, the Son of God; and this at a time when Peter publicly ſaid, that he knew not the man. By this noble and public confeſſion, he has atoned for our mean fear of man, and our unſeaſonable timidity, which ſo often withhold us from confeſſing the truth of his religion; and has acquired for us ſtrength and reſolution undauntedly to profeſs the truth even unto death, and to ſeal it with our blood.

2. The bleſſed Jeſus in the preſence of his very murderers, who were going to pronounce the ſentence of death upon him, with a calm intrepidity acknowledges himſelf the Son of God, who ſhould ſhortly ſit on the right hand of Power; and this confeſſion of his Divinity he ſeals with his blood. Let us then carefully conſider this good confeſſion of Jeſus Chriſt; and pray to God that the proofs, with which it is accompanied, may ſo irradiate our ſouls, that what-

whatever doubts may remain concerning this great truth may be diſperſed like miſts and vapours before the morning ſun.

3. Thoſe who will not believe, that Jeſus Chriſt is a perſon of tranſcendent power and glory, will be made to feel it by fatal experience. The Jews of that age refuſed to believe, that Chriſt was the Son of God; and therefore it is foretold to them, that they ſhould ſoon ſee and experience it: for in leſs than forty years after, ſuch a ſeries of calamities overtook them, to make them ſenſible of the power and dignity of the Perſon they had deſpiſed, rejected, and murdered. Alas! how terribly glorious will the appearance of the Son of God be at the laſt day to thoſe, who have not performed that ſervice which his dignity and glory required of them; who have denied him their hearts, and have refuſed to obey all his commands without exception? That we may not have ſuch a fatal experience of the glory of Jeſus Chriſt, let us believe in his name; ſo that through him we may acquire the noble privilege of becoming the ſons of God, and co-heirs of his glory.

4. He that is a partaker with the deſpiſed Son of Man, in his abaſement and ſufferings, ſhall alſo partake of glory. Thus whoever is not aſhamed of Chriſt, and follows him in this perverſe and adulterous generation, of him the Son of God will not be aſhamed; but will own him in the preſence of Angels before his Father. And though he cannot partake with Chriſt of the honour of ſitting at the right hand of God,

this

this being the peculiar privilege of the only begotten Son of the Father; yet ſhall he ſit on the Throne of Chriſt (*d*), and be made a happy partaker of his glory, as far as he is ſuſceptible of it. And if in the day of the Lord he be found alive, he ſhall, together with thoſe who have ſlept in the Lord, be taken up in the clouds, the chariots of God, even thoſe thouſands of triumphant cars, which God ſhall ſend to attend his Son; and in them ſhall he meet the Lord in the air *(e)*; and thus ſhall he be brought home to his heavenly Father's houſe, there to be for ever with the Lord.

5. As the Divine glory of Jeſus Chriſt is terrible to his enemies; ſo is it highly conſolatory to his faithful friends and ſervants. This confeſſion of Jeſus Chriſt contained in it a ſecret menace, for it was made before his enemies; and ſtill it is pregnant with dreadful threatenings againſt the wicked and profane. For what have they to expect from this their future Judge but a ſevere and terrible ſentence, who have not only denied him the honour and worſhip due to him; but on the contrary, given themſelves up, ſoul and body to the ſervice of Satan, his inveterate enemy, by working all manner of unrighteouſneſs? If the wicked, according to the book of Wiſdom, will be ſtruck with terror that day at the exaltation of the children of God; if when they ſhall ſee them in their tranſcendent glory they will cry out, 'groaning for anguiſh 'of ſpirit, This was he whom we had ſome-

(*d*) Rev. iii. 21. (*e*) 1 Theſſ. iv. 17.

'times

'times in deriſion, and a proverb of reproach:
'We fools accounted his life madneſs, and his
'end to be without honour: How is he num-
'bered among the children of God, and his
'lot is amongſt the ſaints *?' Alas! with what infinitely greater agonies will their conſciences be ſeized, when they ſee the unſupportable glory of the only begotten Son of God, when he ſhall come with amazing pomp, and all his holy Angels with him. What dreadful emotions will this dazzling ſplendor excite in their minds? It will penetrate like a flaſh of lightning into the inmoſt receſſes of their ſouls, and throw them into an irrecoverable confuſion, and ever-during agonies of mind. If the manifeſtation of the glory of Chriſt will be thus terrible to all the wicked and impenitent, it will be no leſs comfortable to his real diſciples. They will, even in this life, be convinced of the infinite efficacy of his ſufferings, when they reflect, that Chriſt, the anointed of the Lord, the only Son of God, has for our ſake poured out his ſoul unto death; and ſhall not the blood of the Son of God cleanſe us from all ſin (*i*)? By this conſideration, they will not only be ſerene in all dangers, but be comforted even in death. For, what ſhould they fear, when they know that he who ſitteth at the right hand of Power, who is raiſed to his Father's throne, to whom the clouds of heaven are a chariot, is their Friend and Protector? What motive have they to dread the day of his appearance, when they conſider that the

* Wiſdom, v. 3, 4, 5. (*b*) 1 John i. 7.

Patron

Patron, the Friend of mankind, even he who vouchſafed to call himſelf their Brother, will be their Judge? Let us then endeavour, by the light of the holy Spirit, to attain to a true knowledge of Jeſus Chriſt. Let us pour forth our prayers to God, that at the hour of death, he will give us a ſight of his glory. The firſt martyr, Stephen, died with joy, when he ſaw the heavens opened, and Jeſus ſtanding at the right hand of God (*k*). Thus we alſo ſhall be able to depart from hence with confidence and joy, if we have a lively knowledge of this glory to which Jeſus Chriſt is exalted, and a lively hope that we ſhall be made partakers of his glory.

THE PRAYER.

O Faithful and ever-living God, we bleſs thy glorious name for giving up thy beloved Son to be judged by the wicked, that we might not come into eternal judgment, and be ſentenced to everlaſting death. We alſo praiſe thee, O Son of the Father, for that good confeſſion that thou madeſt before this unrighteous tribunal; when, as a ſworn witneſs, thou didſt acknowledge the truth of thy Divine glory to the face of thy blood-thirſty judges, and didſt thereby lay the corner-ſtone of our faith, ſo that it cannot be moved. Make ſuch a deep impreſſion of this truth on our ſouls, that it may never ſlip out of our minds. Irradiate our hearts

(*k*) Acts vii. 55.

with a beam of thy glory, and cauſe it to ſtrike a ſalutary terror into all ſecure minds, who go on in their impenitence, denying thee, and refuſing to worſhip and obey thee. By this confeſſion of thy dignity, ſtrengthen and comfort thy true diſciples and followers, in all the dangers and ſufferings they are to undergo for thy ſake. Make them ſenſible that thou ſitteſt at the right hand of Power, and that thy arm is not ſhortened to help them, and deliver them out of all their troubles. Hear us, O Lord, and, by thy good confeſſion, give us reſolution likewiſe to confeſs thy name before men, and to follow thee even to ſufferings and to death. Amen.

CONSIDERATION IX.

The ſentence paſſed on JESUS CHRIST, *after his confeſſion.*

'(*a*) THEN the High Prieſt rent his 'clothes, ſaying, He has ſpoken blaſ-'phemy; What farther need have we of wit-'neſſes? Behold, now ye have heard his blaſ-'phemy: What think ye? They all con-'demned him, and anſwered and ſaid, He is 'guilty of death.'

In theſe words is related the condemnation of the Lord Jeſus, which immediately followed his confeſſion. Here we may obſerve,

Firſt, The charge on which the ſentence of death is grounded.

(*a*) Matt. xxvi. 65, 66. Mark xiv. 63, 64.

Secondly,

Secondly, The falſe gloſs put upon this accuſation, in order to gain it the more credit.

Thirdly, The ſentence of condemnation.

I.

The charge or accuſation, on which the ſentence of death was grounded, is contained in theſe words: 'Then the High Prieſt ſaid, He 'has ſpoken blaſphemy.' Blaſphemy is a ſin of the deepeſt dye, as it is committed immediately againſt the Divine Majeſty. Now, God may be blaſphemed either directly, or indirectly. When this all-glorious Being is ſpoken of with contempt and mockery, and profane blaſphemous words are uttered againſt him, this is direct blaſphemy. But when any thing unbecoming, or abſurd, is imputed to the Divine Majeſty; or when a man arrogates to himſelf what properly belongs to the ſupreme Being, and conſequently incommunicable to any creature; it is nothing leſs than indirect blaſphemy. In the latter ſenſe our Mediator, according to the perverſe judgment of his enemies, had blaſphemed God; ſince he made himſelf to be the Son of God, as they afterwards reported the matter to Pilate (*b*), and conſequently robbed the God of Iſrael of his honour, by ſharing it with Him, who had expreſly ſaid, 'I will not give my honour to 'another (*c*).' This horrid accuſation was the effect of extreme blindneſs and ignorance, increaſed by the clouds of paſſion; ſo that, as St. Paul ſays, 'They knew not the Lord of 'Glory (*d*).' For the High Prieſt, looking on

(*b*) John xix. 7. (*c*) Iſaiah xlii. 8. (*d*) 1 Cor. ii. 8.

Jeſus, who ſtood before his judgment-ſeat, as a mere man, wrongly judged, that he had ſpoken blaſphemy, becauſe he had made himſelf the Son of God; Nay, he accounted him not only a mere man, but a profane and impious man, a falſe prophet, and a ſeducer of the people; ſo that from this falſe prepoſſeſſion, our Saviour's confeſſion muſt have appeared to him a blaſphemy of the worſt kind.

But this was not the firſt accuſation of this kind charged on the holy and innocent Lamb of God. A ſimilar charge is recorded in St. John's Goſpel (*e*), to which our bleſſed Lord had returned a ſatisfactory anſwer (*f*). This is ſtill the way of the world, ever charging the faithful ſervants of God with repetitions of trite calumnies and accuſations, which have often been refuted before. Hence we may learn,

1. That it is not unuſual for the perſecutors of true believers, to be guilty of the ſame ſins and enormous crimes, with which they accuſe the ſervants of God. Thus the High Prieſt himſelf, in declaring the only begotten Son of God to be a blaſphemer, commits the greateſt blaſphemy. Satan had ſo far blinded the High Prieſt, the head of the Jewiſh Nation, as to condemn for blaſphemy two of the moſt ſacred truths, the ſources of all comfort in life and death; namely, that Jeſus Chriſt is the Son of God, and that he ſitteth at the right hand of Power. The heads of the Jewiſh church had long before blaſphemed the doctrines of our

(*e*) John v. 17, 18. x. 32. (*f*) Ibid. 34, 35, 36, 37, 38.

bleſſed

bleſſed Saviour, declaring them falſe and heretical. They had blaſphemed his dvine miracles, by imputing them to the ſecret operation of the prince of the devils. They had blaſphemed his ſacred perſon, calling him a Samaritan, a glutton, and wine-bibber, and accuſing him of having a devil, or a Familiar. And now, their blaſphemy ſoars to the very higheſt pitch; for they attack his very office of Meſſiah, and deny his being the eternal Son of God; charging him with blaſphemy, becauſe he openly profeſſed himſelf the Meſſiah, as, in reality, he was. Nay, on two different occaſions, *viz.* at the River Jordan, and on Mount Tabor, the Father by a voice from heaven had proclaimed, 'This is 'my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleaſed.' The devil himſelf had frequently, by the mouth of the Demoniacs, declared Jeſus to be the Son of the Moſt High, and the Holy One of God (*g*).

2. From this unjuſt accuſation of the Son of God we may learn, that by his ſuffering himſelf to be ſentenced to death in our ſtead, as a blaſphemer, he gave the higheſt proof of his love for us. For by this he has expiated the crime committed by our firſt parents, and the guilt, of which all his deſcendants are partakers. Their fall was an indirect blaſphemy againſt the Majeſty of God. For man ſought, by the inſtigation of the devil, to rob God of his honour, and to arrogate it to himſelf. He would fain be like God, and obtain a knowledge of good and evil, equal to that of Omniſcience itſelf. He would

(*g*) Mark i. 24. v. 7.

acknowledge no ſuperior to preſcribe laws to him, and controll his freedom; but his haughty ſoul would be an independent ſpirit, like God himſelf. Upon this, the Father and Repreſentative of Mankind, and we all with him and in him, fell under the ſentence of temporal and eternal death; which would have been conſequently executed on us all. Now, for the atonement of that blaſphemous ſin, and to diſcharge us from that ſentence of death conſequential to it, the Son of God ſuffered himſelf to be ſentenced to death, as one who would rob God of his honour, by making himſelf equal to God. Let us hence learn, that the fall of Adam was not ſuch a trifling fault; did not conſiſt merely in taſting an apple, as ſome profane men would inſinuate with a ſneer, who even dare to cenſure the all-wiſe God for his ſeverity to Adam, becauſe he taſted a forbidden fruit. Alas! the taſting of the apple was but an overt-act of the treaſon which had already cauſed the fall within him; and which conſiſted in an execrable departure from God, a preſumptuous deſire of being equal in knowledge, *&c.* with his Creator, and conſequently of debaſing God, in order to exalt himſelf. For this blaſphemous preſumption, there could be no other ſatisfaction, than that the only Son of God ſhould ſuffer himſelf to be brought to a trial, and ſentenced to die as a blaſphemer. In this is verified the Meſſiah's complaint to his heavenly Father in the Pſalms, which is alſo repeated by St. Paul, 'The

'reproaches

'reproaches of them that reproached thee, are 'fallen upon me *(h)*.' Blaſphemy is the higheſt pitch of wickedneſs which human nature can be guilty of; and yet it lurks too often in the human heart, which ſhould make us ſhudder at the thought. Our Lord himſelf obſerves, 'That 'out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, mur-'ders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, falſe-'witneſs, and blaſphemies (*i*).' This bitter root ſhoots forth when any external opportunity offers, and ſhews itſelf in the wicked and unconverted in blaſphemies againſt God and his ſacred Word, and in profane obloquy againſt the Divine Majeſty; eſpecially when they are under any violent pain. For St. John (*k*) obſerves, that wicked 'men, being ſcorched with great heat, blaſ-'phemed the name of God, who had power 'over thoſe plagues, and they repented not to 'give him glory: they gnawed their tongues for 'pain, and blaſphemed the God of heaven, be-'cauſe of their pains, and of their ſores.' Hence ſome are of opinion, that it will be the only ſin of the damned to lift up their tortured tongues to all eternity againſt God, and rage againſt, and blaſpheme the Author of their being; for they will then be under an incapacity of committing murders, thefts, and other ſins. From this eternal torment, the Son of God, in ſuffering himſelf to be ſentenced as a blaſphemer, hath delivered all thoſe who truly repent of their impious ſpeeches againſt heaven, and believe on his name. But even pious ſouls are ſometimes ſurpriſed with

(*h*) Pſ. lxix. 9. (*i*) Matth. xv. 19. (*k*) Rev. xvi. 9, 10, 11.

blaſpemous and evil thoughts, at which they themſelves ſhudder, and often fall into great trouble and anguiſh of mind on that account. For Satan, even whilſt they are praying, reading, meditating on the Word of God, or attending the public worſhip, diſcharges ſuch fiery darts into their minds, which give them more pain than any outward temptations. Now for the remiſſion of both kinds of blaſphemy, namely, that committed by the profane and unconverted, and thoſe evil thoughts which intrude themſelves on the children of God, to whom they give the moſt painful concern, Chriſt ſuffered himſelf to be accuſed of blaſphemy in the council of the wicked. There are ſtill hopes of grace even for obſtinate and profane blaſphemers, if they will but heartily repent of their horrid guilt, and fly for refuge to Jeſus Chriſt their Mediator and Interceſſor. Let none therefore deſpair, who are heartily ſorry for this heinous ſin; for to deſpair on account of it is ſtill worſe than blaſphemy itſelf. But with much more aſſurance, may they, who, againſt their will, are only paſſive in regard to ſuch blaſphemous thoughts, lay claim to the merits of Chriſt; believe, that in conſequence of his ſpotleſs innocence, who was accuſed as a blaſphemer, their heavenly Father will not impute to them thoſe evil thoughts, which they themſelves deteſt and abhor; will but charge them to the account of that evil ſpirit, who ſuggeſted them to the unwilling mind.

Moreover

II.

Moreover a falſe gloſs was ſet upon this horrid accuſation, in order to render it more probable, and worthy of credit. This conſiſted in the following circumſtances.

1. The High Prieſt rent his clothes. Now the High Prieſt was expreſly forbidden to rend his clothes, which was a cuſtom practiſed among the Jews, to expreſs their extreme trouble at hearing any blaſphemy againſt God (*k*). Thus Hezekiah and his ſervants rent their clothes at the blaſphemy of Rabſhakeh (*l*). Thus the High Prieſt would ſhew by this action, that he was ſo moved and tranſported with zeal at the blaſphemy uttered by Jeſus of Nazareth, that he could not contain his rage; but tore his garments, contrary to the Divine injunction. Thus were the ſufferings of our bleſſed Lord aggravated by this hypocritical act of the High Prieſt.

But the High Prieſt's rending his clothes, in his exceſs of zeal, ſeems to be an emblem of the approaching abolition of the Levitical public worſhip. As the rent in Samuel's clothes ſignified that the Lord had given the kingdom of Iſrael from Saul to his neighbour, who was more worthy of it (*m*); ſo did this rent alſo denote, that the High Prieſthood ſhould be rent from the tribe of Levi, and given to a better High Prieſt. Hence an ingenious writer * ſays, 'One 'may ſee that the High Prieſt, when he con-

(*k*) Lev. xxi. 10. (*l*) 2 Kings xviii. 37. xix. 1.
(*m*) 1 Sam. xv. 27, 28. * Dr. Pet. Allix.

demned

'demned Chriſt to die, rent his clothes, and 'thereby entirely put an end to the dig-'nity and power of his prieſthood; where-'as Chriſt's garments were not torn or divided, 'thereby to indicate the eternity of his prieſt-'hood.'

2. The High Prieſt rejected all other witneſſes as unneceſſary and ſuperfluous, and ſaid, 'What farther need have we of witneſſes?' What ſignifies hearing any more evidences, when his crimes are as clear as the ſun at noon day? The judges, by all their falſe witneſſes, had not been able to compaſs their end; ſo that now they were over-joyed when they had, by our Saviour's own confeſſion, found a ſhorter way for convicting him.

3. The High Prieſt appealed to the whole aſſembly, 'Behold! now ye have heard his 'blaſphemy. You yourſelves, my worthy colleagues, are the moſt unexceptionable witneſſes. Hitherto we had only heard it from the mouths of others; but this very inſtant we have heard his blaſphemy from his own mouth, and our ears ſtill tingle with the horrid ſound.

4. The High Prieſt deſired their opinion on the affair, ſaying, 'What think ye?' He had already by his own judgment artfully anticipated theirs, had declared Chriſt's confeſſion to be blaſphemy, and, in his hypocritical zeal, even rent his clothes. After having thus, as it were, dictated to his colleagues and aſſiſtants how to vote, he aſks their opinion of the matter; whereas, had he proceeded equitably, he ſhould

firſt have maturely examined, whether the confeſſion of Jeſus contained any thing contrary to the writings of Moſes and the Prophets, or that could juſtly be conſtrued as blaſphemy. But inſtead of making any farther enquiry, ſentence of death was precipitately pronounced without any real proof of the crime.

III.

We come now, in the laſt place, briefly to conſider the ſentence of condemnation: 'They 'all condemned him, and anſwered and ſaid, 'He is guilty of death.' Here it may be objected, Was not Nicodemus, was not Joſeph of Arimathea among the number? How then comes St. Mark to affirm, that they ALL condemned him. To this it may be anſwered, that either thoſe good men were not preſent, or were looked upon only as cyphers by the reſt. This conjecture is confirmed by St. Luke (*n*); for to the eternal honour of Joſeph of Arimathea, it is ſaid, 'the ſame had not conſented 'to the counſel and deed of them.' And though, by his oppoſition, he could not avert the ſentence of death that was paſſed on our bleſſed Saviour; yet is his proteſt entered in the Book of God, and, on the day of the appearance of the Lord Jeſus, will be publickly made known to his unſpeakable comfort and applauſe. Moreover, there is no doubt, but that among the other members of the council there were not wanting ſome who were convinced of our Lord's innocence; and if they joined in con-

(*n*) Chap. xxiii. 21.

demning

demning him, their compliance did not proceed from ignorance, hatred, or envy; but from the fear of man, that they might not incur the High Prieſt's diſpleaſure, or be thus reproached, as Nicodemus was, 'Art thou alſo 'a Galilean (*o*)?' Beſides, 'many of the chief 'Rulers believed on him; but, becauſe of the 'Phariſees, they did not confeſs him,' and concealed their ſentiments; 'for they loved 'the praiſe of men more than the praiſe of 'God (*p*).

They cried out with one voice, He is guilty of death. They did not only ſay, He ſhall die; but that he well deſerved to die; and that by their ſentence, and by the Jewiſh law, it was fit he ſhould ſuffer death. For this, they thought they had ſufficient authority from the Divine Law, which ſays, 'He that blaſphemeth the 'name of the Lord ſhall ſurely be put to death; 'and all the congregation ſhall certainly ſtone 'him: as well the ſtranger, as he that is born 'in the land, when he blaſphemeth the name 'of the Lord, he ſhall be put to death (*q*).' He that blaſphemed the name of God, it is true, deſerved to die; but nothing could be more unjuſt than the application of this crime to the innocent Jeſus. For, as our bleſſed Lord had ſufficiently ſhewn by his divine Works, that he was the Meſſiah and great Prophet who had been foretold by Moſes, they ſhould have conſidered that Moſes had predicted, that the

(*o*) John vii. 52. (*p*) John xii. 42, 43.
(*q*) Lev. xxiv. 16.

words

words of God, *i. e.* words which none but God could utter with propriety, ſhould be put in his mouth *(r)*; that their own Prophets had propheſied of the Son of Man, who ſhould come in the clouds of heaven, and ſit on the right hand of God *(s)*. Conſequently, when he, whom they looked upon as merely the Son of Man, declared himſelf the Son of God, what he ſpoke could not be any blaſphemy againſt his heavenly Father. On the contrary, no farther examination was thought of. The bleſſed Jeſus was denied the common indulgence given by the Jewiſh laws to every criminal, *viz.* that of making his defence; and this Supreme Legiſlator was with the moſt impatient precipitancy condemned, as a tranſgreſſor of the law, without a hearing. Hence we may learn the following truths.

1. It is no diſgrace to a good cauſe to be rejected and condemned by the majority of an auguſt aſſembly. This may appear ſtrange to the ignorant and unthinking. But diſcerning perſons, who know the nature of ſuch aſſemblies, how many pliable members have a ſeat there, and how much the will of one, or a few leading men, predominates in them, will not at all be ſurpriſed at their partial proceedings. It cannot well be otherwiſe, than that human affairs ſhould be determined in aſſemblies by majority of voices: But the prince of darkneſs is ſeldom at a loſs to gain over the

(*r*) Compare Deut. xviii. 18. with John iii. 34.
(*s*) Dan. vii. 13, 14. Pſ. viii. 4, 5, 6. cx. 1.

moſt

moſt votes for the advantage of his kingdom, and the oppreſſion of innocence and truth. The only begotten Son of God is here condemned by a majority of votes; and the world will not deal more favourably with his diſciples and followers.

2. Chriſt, indeed, was unjuſtly condemned in a human court of judicature; but even according to the ſentence of the Divine Juſtice, he was alſo counted worthy of death. For he was become a Surety for the whole race of ſinners, who had deſerved death. He took upon himſelf the crime of high treaſon againſt God, committed by our firſt Parents; permitted the guilt of it to be imputed to him at the judgment-ſeat; and freely offered to ſubmit to the ſentence of death, which, according to the decree of Divine Juſtice, was to be executed on blaſphemers. Therefore it is here ſaid, 'He is guilty of death.' The eternal Son of God, having with the conſent, and according to the will, of his heavenly Father, allowed the guilt of our ſins to be imputed to himſelf, and conſequently our puniſhment to be inflicted on him, was truly worthy of death; and heard ſentence pronounced on himſelf, without any compaſſion or favour, from the mouths of thoſe judges who, in Scripture, are termed Gods. Have we ever, during the courſe of our lives, cordially thanked our bleſſed Saviour on our knees for ſuch an unparalleled inſtance of his love to the human race?

Tremble,

Tremble, all ye that ſtill ſerve ſin, and are under its influence and dominion! tremble at the rigour of Divine Juſtice againſt ſin, which did not pardon the Son of God; for as he allowed our ſins to be imputed to himſelf, ſo the ſentence of death was paſſed on him. Will you ſtill ſport and play with ſin? Will you ſtill make it your delight, after it has drawn the ſentence of death on the beloved Son of God? Alas! how juſt and reaſonable will your condemnation be at the tremendous day of judgment, if neither the conſideration of the rigour of Divine Juſtice has been able to prevail on you to forſake your ſinful and wicked ways; nor the love of Him, who permitted himſelf to be ſentenced to death for you, can induce and allure you to employ the reſt of your lives in his ſervice?

But as for you, who feel in your conſciences the curſe and ſentence of death, paſſed on you by the Law; comfort your terrified minds with theſe conſiderations. Lift up your eyes to the Lamb of God, the ſacred Victim on whom his heavenly Father has impoſed this curſe and ſentence of death. Your Mediator and Surety is, according to the Law, ſentenced as guilty of death, and at the ſame time declared an accurſed malefactor, and unworthy to live any longer among God's people. 'The chaſtiſement 'of your peace was upon him:' The ſentence having been executed on him; you are for ever diſcharged from it. Believe on this Jeſus who was ſentenced to death; and ye 'ſhall not

'come

'come unto judgment, but ſhall paſs from 'death unto life.' He is taken from priſon and from judgment: He, as the Son of God, is by the Reſurrection acquitted and diſcharged from the ſentence of death. As you are already ſentenced in his ſacred perſon; ſo are ye alſo acquitted and abſolved with him after his Reſurrection. He could juſtly ſay, 'Behold 'the Lord God will help me, who is he that 'ſhall condemn me?' So likewiſe may you with all boldneſs ſay, Who will condemn me? Chriſt who died, or rather who is riſen again *(t)*, is condemned in my ſtead; and therefore there is now no condemnation to them who are in Chriſt Jeſus *(u)*.

On the other hand, you, who are already in the fellowſhip of Jeſus Chriſt, expreſs your praiſe, love, and gratitude to your faithful Saviour, who, out of his great love to your immortal ſouls, has taken on himſelf the rigorous and painful ſentence which you had juſtly deſerved! Count not your lives dear for His ſake, who counted not his own life too dear to deliver it up for your ſalvation. Enure yourſelves to the imitation of your Lord and Maſter; and arm yourſelves with his ſentence againſt all the accuſations of ſin and the Law. Let the love of Chriſt compel you zealouſly to execute that ſentence of death, which was already paſt on the old man in baptiſm. Account it baſe and unworthy that this enemy of God, who for its rebellion againſt the Divine Majeſty is worthy

(*t*) Rom. viii. 34. (*u*) Rom. viii. 1.

of

of death, ſhould live any longer in you; that you may manifeſt in yourſelves the diſtinguiſhing marks of thoſe, to whom there is no longer any condemnation, who walk not after the fleſh, but after the ſpirit (*x*).

THE PRAYER.

O Faithful and gracious Saviour! thankſgiving, and praiſe, and honour, and glory, be aſcribed to thee, O Lamb of God, who waſt ſlain for our ſake, and didſt take upon thee the ſentence under which the whole race of mankind lay, and which was to be executed on us all; who didſt ſuffer thyſelf to be cut off out of the land of the living, that we might be delivered from the ſentence of everlaſting death, and be declared heirs of eternal life. Let thy Holy Spirit illuminate our ſouls with the light of this incomprehenſible love; and, whenever we are tempted to commit ſin, caſt an eye of pity on us, that we may derive new ſtrength to renounce and overcome the world, and willingly even to pour out our own lives unto death for thy ſake. Amen.

(*x*) Rom. viii. 1.

CONSIDERATION X.

The illegal and rude treatment of CHRIST *after ſentence was paſſed upon him.*

'(a) THEN ſome began to ſpit on him, 'and they did ſpit in his face. And 'the ſervants, and the men who held Jeſus, 'mocked him, ſmote him, and buffeted him. 'And they blindfolded him, and ſtruck him 'on the face; and aſked him, ſaying, Propheſy 'unto us, thou Chriſt, who is it that ſmote 'thee? And many other things blaſphemouſly 'ſpake they againſt him.'

Theſe words exhibit to us the illegal and contumelious treatment of the bleſſed Jeſus, after ſentence had been paſſed on him. For the members of the Sanhedrim, after having pronounced our bleſſed Saviour guilty of death as a ſuppoſed blaſphemer, were prevented by their fear of the people from proceeding to execute their ſentence; but reſolved to recommend the execution of it to Pilate, the Roman governor. But as it was not yet light, all other proceedings againſt the Lord Jeſus were ſuſpended till the next morning; and therefore the members of the Council ſeparated, and moſt of them went to their reſpective homes: others continued together in the High Prieſt's houſe, and either retired to reſt in ſome of

(a) Matth. xxvi. 67, 68. Mark. xiv. 65. Luke xxii. 63. 64, 65.

the

the apartments, or walked about, and paſſed away the time in converſation. But ſo much favour was not ſhewn to the condemned Jeſus, as to carry him to a quiet priſon, and there to be kept until break of day, that he might enjoy a little reſt after his fatigue, and painful agony. On the contrary, he is turned over to the ſervants and officers of the Court, who, during the reſt of the night, inſulted our bleſſed Lord, as their inveterate malice prompted them, in the moſt inhuman and barbarous manner. Thus on the laſt night of our bleſſed Saviour's life, his eyelids were never cloſed in ſleep. And as the High Prieſts of the Old Teſtament did not uſe to ſleep, on the night preceding the great Day of Atonement; ſo the true High Prieſt of the New Teſtament was a ſtranger to ſleep, by the cruelty of his enemies, the night preceding the important day on which the ſins of the whole human race were to be expiated, that there might be the more exact conformity between the Type and the great Antitype. By this circumſtance, our bleſſed Saviour has likewiſe ſanctified the ſleepleſs nights of his faithful ſervants, when either in the pangs of repentance, inward temptations, or outward ſufferings and afflictions, they cannot forbear crying out with the Pſalmiſt, 'Thou holdeſt mine 'eyes waking (*b*).' So that when on any of theſe accounts we cannot ſleep in our beds, let us think on theſe ſleepleſs hours of our Lord and Saviour, on the night when he was be-

(*b*) Pſalm lxxvii. 4.

trayed, bound, ſentenced to death, and treated in the moſt contemptuous and barbarous manner.

In farther treating on theſe words, I ſhall conſider,

Firſt, The perſons by whom our Saviour was thus injuriouſly treated, and

Secondly, The ill-treatment which he patiently endured.

I.

As to the perſons by whom our bleſſed Saviour was injuriouſly treated, St. Matthew ſays only in general, 'They did ſpit in his face.' St. Mark is more particular, and obſerves that 'ſome began to ſpit on him, to cover his face, 'and to buffet him, and the ſervants did ſtrike 'him with the palms of their hands.' But St. Luke expreſſes it thus: 'And the men that 'held Jeſus mocked him.' It is very probable, that either the chief Prieſts themſelves, or ſome other members of the Sanhedrim, when the aſſembly was diſſolved, went out of the hall; and begun this unjuſt treatment, and, as it were, gave the ſignal for it, by ſpitting in his face as they paſſed by Jeſus, and venting imprecations againſt him, as a deteſtable blaſphemer. For, according to the connection of St. Matthew's account, they who had before ſaid, 'he is guilty of death' lead the way in this abuſive treatment of our Saviour. Now this was not ſaid by the ſervants, but by the Members of the Council; and St. Mark ſays, 'And ſome began to ſpit on 'him, and the ſervants did ſtrike him with the

'palms

'palms of their hands;' ſo that he diſtinguiſhes between thoſe who began to ſpit on our bleſſed Lord, and the ſervants who ſtruck him. When the Council had ſet the example of inſulting Jeſus, and of giving him up, as an accurſed perſon, to all manner of ill uſuage, all the ſervants and inferior officers ſoon followed it. Theſe St. Luke calls 'the men who held Jeſus;' namely, thoſe who had apprehended and bound him, and ſtill held him bound, being appointed to watch and ſecure him till the morning. As this unruly multitude was compoſed of Roman ſoldiers, whom Pilate had furniſhed them with, and Jewiſh ſervants and officers, who belonged to the Sanhedrim; both were concerned in this abuſive and injurious treatment, and paſſed away their time in offering the greateſt inſults and indignities to the Son of God. Before we proceed any further, we ſhall make the following obſervation on the ſubject before us.

That they who do not know the Lord of Glory ſhould revile him, is not to be wondered at; but is it not aſtoniſhing, that he ſhould daily be reviled by thoſe who acknowledge him to be the Son of God? St. Paul ſays of the rulers of the Jews, 'that they would not have crucified 'the Lord of glory, had they known him (*c*).' With much more reaſon may it be ſaid of theſe rude ignorant ſervants, they would not have ſpit on the bleſſed Jeſus, and ſtruck him, had they been ſenſible of the adorable dignity of his ſacred perſon; but they concluded that Jeſus

(*c*) 1 Cor. ii. 8.

was a falſe prophet and a blaſphemer, ſince the Sanhedrim had condemned him as ſuch. And though at other times they would have pitied the greateſt malefactor, when under ſentence of death, rather than add to his ſorrow, by ridiculing and inſulting him; yet the ſervants of the Jewiſh Council imagined, that they did God ſervice by thus injuriouſly treating a man, whom they looked upon as an impious blaſphemer. But it is greatly to be apprehended, that in the day of judgment it will be more tolerable for theſe ſoldiers and ſervants, than for thoſe wretched nominal Chriſtians, who by their behaviour inſult Him, whom they confeſs with their mouths.

II.

As to the injurious treatment which our Lord ſuffered from theſe perſons, it conſiſted in the ſeven following particulars. But previouſly to the particular conſideration of each of theſe inſults, we ſhall make ſome general remarks on the ſubject.

Firſt, In this abuſive treatment of the Son of God, the ſoldiers did not act merely according to the impulſe of their depraved nature; but their hands and tongues were the inſtruments of the prince of darkneſs, who now poured on the Son of God all the indignities which infernal malice could invent.

Secondly, The prophetic office of Jeſus Chriſt was the mark, at which the keen arrows of reproach were here chiefly levelled. The office in which the Son of God chiefly diſplays his wiſdom, as his regal office declares his power, and his

his prieſtly office his love, here becomes the ſport of fools; and it is vilified in the High Prieſt's palace, as the kingly office of Chriſt was chiefly inſulted and derided in the palace of the Roman governor.

Thirdly, Though the Son of God may ſeem to be entirely delivered up to the rude inſults of ſervants; yet nothing here happened to him but according to the predetermined Council of God. Indeed, the devil acted in theſe ſons of wickedneſs according to the impulſe of his malignant nature; but God had ſet limits to his rage and malice, and without the leaſt participation in the guilt, over-ruled every circumſtance for the accompliſhment of the prophecies, inſpired by the Holy Ghoſt. According to theſe prophecies, as the Meſſiah, at his examination and trial, was ſurrounded as it were by bulls and dogs, opening wide their mouths, as a ravening and roaring lion (*d*); ſo was he now to experience what is foretold in the following paſſages of Scripture: 'The aſſembly of the wicked have incloſed 'me: I am become a worm and no man; a 'reproach of men, and deſpiſed of the peo-'ple (*e*).' Here the Meſſiah was deſpiſed 'by 'man, abhorred by the nation, a ſervant of 'rulers (*f*).' He was 'deſpiſed and rejected of 'men; a man of ſorrows and acquainted with 'grief and we hid, as it were, our faces from 'him, [by blindfolding him;] he was deſpiſed, 'and we eſteemed him not (*g*).' Here the

(*d*) Pſ. xxii. 12, 13, 16.
(*e*) Pſ. xxii. 6.
(*f*) Iſaiah xlix. 7.
(*g*) Iſaiah liii. 3.

Rock of ſalvation was lightly eſteemed by his people *(h)*. Here the Meſſiah's prophetic complaint was fulfilled, 'I gave my back to the 'ſmiters, and my cheeks to them that plucked 'off the hair; I hid not my face from ſhame 'and ſpitting: I have ſet my face like a flint, 'and I know that I ſhall not be aſhamed (*i*).'

Laſtly, Here was alſo fulfilled what the Lord Jeſus himſelf had foretold, namely, 'The ſon 'of Man ſhall be mocked, and ſpitefully treated, 'and ſpitted on (*k*).' Hence it appears, that nothing fell out on this occaſion, but what God in his wiſe Counſel had predetermined concerning the Meſſiah, and likewiſe foretold by the mouth of his holy Prophets. This is a powerful preſervative againſt the offence of the croſs.

Let us proceed to take a ſeparate view of the ſeveral kinds of inſults offered our bleſſed Saviour, and point out what uſeful meditations they afford to a pious ſoul. It is ſaid by St. Luke,

1. 'And the men who held Jeſus mocked him, and ſmote him *(l)*.' We find in the hiſtory of our Saviour's paſſion, that during his ſufferings, he was mocked in four ſeveral places; namely, in Caiaphas's houſe, in Herod's palace (*m*), at Pilate's judgment ſeat (*n*), and on the Mount of Golgotha *(o)*. In all theſe paſſages, the other Evangeliſts uſe the ſame words * as St. Luke does in the paſſage above cited. They not only mocked him, but it is added, 'they ſmote him,'

(*h*) Deut. xxxii. 15. (*i*) Iſaiah l. 6, 7. (*k*) Luke xviii. 32.
(*l*) Luke xxii. 63. (*m*) Luke xxiii. 11. (*n*) Matth. xxvii. 29—31.
(*o*) Matth. xxvii. 41. Luke xxiii. 36.
* ἐνεπαιζον, pueriliter illudebant.

i. e.

i. e. they mocked him, ſtriking him, and tearing off his ſkin *. It is probable, that among other inſults they took the bleſſed Jeſus by the beard, and pulled it with ſuch violence as to tear off the ſkin with the hair; and thus was literally fulfilled the prophecy of Iſaiah, 'I gave 'my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair.' That this was one of the moſt painful and ignominious inſults uſed among the antients, appears from many paſſages in profane authors.

2. 'They did ſpit in his face.' This both by Jews and Gentiles has ever been accounted a mark of the utmoſt contempt. It ſenſibly grieved the patient Job, 'that the children of baſe men did 'not ſpare to ſpit in his face *(p)*;' and in the Old Teſtament, when any one refuſed to raiſe up a family for his brother who died without iſſue, by marrying his widow, ſhe was in the preſence of the elders to pull off his ſhoe, and ſpit in his face. Here a mean rabble impiouſly preſume to ſpit on him, who is infinitely ſuperior to Job. What an affecting ſight muſt this have been, to ſee that amiable, benign countenance, which even Angels delighted to behold, all covered over with loathſome ſpittle?

How is a true believer humbled at the conſideration of this inconceivable abaſement of the Son of God? And when he reflects, that this ſacred face, the expreſs image of the inviſible God was here inſulted with mocking and ſpitting, he cries out, "Oh, the incomprehenſible pro-

* δερειν (unde δερμα pellis) propriè ſignificat excoriare, vel pellem detrahere.

(*p*) Job xxx. 8. 10.

"digy,

" digy, both of Divine love and human wick-
" edneſs! How is it, O Lord, that thy ſacred
" face was covered with ſpittle and bruſes?
" that face, reſplendent with divine glory;
" that face, which on Mount Tabor ſhone like
" the meridian Sun; that face, before which
" adoring Angels veil their faces, as dazzled with
" its inſupportable effulgence. It is I that
" deſerve to be ſpit on; it is I that deſerve to be
" driven from God's preſence; for I have not
" forbore to ſin before his face, who is preſent
" every where. I thank thee, my Lord and Sa-
" viour, for ſuch an aſtoniſhing abaſement. But
" thou thyſelf haſt been pleaſed to reveal to me
" the ſacred motives and generous views, that
" induced thee to ſubmit to it, by ſaying, 'For
' thy ſake, O God, I have borne reproaches;
' ſhame hath covered my face: The reproaches
' of them that reproached thee are fallen upon
' me *(q)*.' Hence I learn, that the honour
" of thy Almighty Father to which thou waſt
" to make ſatisfaction, together with the great-
" neſs and heinouſneſs of my ſins, which thou
" as our Surety didſt take on thee, required
" that thou ſhouldeſt be outraged, as the diſgrace
" of mankind. Praiſe and honour be to thee,
" O Lamb of God, for theſe proofs of thine obe-
" dience to thy heavenly Father, and thy ten-
" der love to my ſoul."

3. ' They ſmote him with the palms of their
' hands, or with rods *.'

(*q*) Pſalm lxix. 7, 9.
* ἐῤῥαπισαν ἀ ῥαπις virga. *W.*

' 4. They

4. ‘ They buffeted’, or ſmote him with their fiſts. St. Luke, indeed, expreſſes theſe inſults in one ſingle phraſe; but St. Matthew and St. Mark make uſe of two different words, denoting, that ſome ſtruck our bleſſed Saviour on the cheeks with the palms of their hands, and likewiſe on that ſacred mouth * which had always moſt religiouſly obſerved the law of truth. Thus they inſulted him as a liar and falſe prophet; as Zedekiah ſtruck the prophet Micah on the cheek; and Paſhur offered the ſame indignity to Jeremiah (*r*).

5. ‘ They blindfolded him,’ *i. e.* They neither covered his face, or held their hands before his eyes. It was a cuſtom among the Orientals to cover the heads of perſons under ſentence of death, of which there is an inſtance in the ſtory of Haman (*ſ*); and this cuſtom was not unknown among the Romans †. Poſſibly the majeſty of our bleſſed Lord’s eyes was more than theſe ſervants could bear; and therefore they covered them, that his piercing looks might not diſturb theſe wretches in their inſolent wantonneſs. Beſides, their execrable view in this inſult was, to make a paſtime of the ſufferings of our Saviour, by blindfolding and ſtriking him, and then aſking who gave him the blow. Therefore it is immediately added,

6. ‘ They ſtruck him on the face, and aſked

* κολαφιζειν colaphum alicui infligere, alapam infringere. *W.*

(*r*) 1 Kings xxii. 24. Jer. xx. 2. (*ſ*) Eſther vii. 8.

† *Ut conſtat ex formula*, I Lictor, caput obnubito, infelici arbore ſuſpendito. Vide CORN ADAMI Obſerv. Theol. & Philol. p. 59.

‘ him,

'him, ſaying, Propheſy unto us, thou Chriſt, 'who is it that ſmote thee?' Thus they make a mock of the eternal Wiſdom, and ridicule our Lord's prophetic office for which the Father had ſanctified him, and ſent him into the world. Jeſus had before acknowledged himſelf to be the Meſſiah; and at the ſame time, when he made that acknowledgement, diſcloſed an effulgent ray of his omniſcience, ſaying, 'Hence-'forth ſhall ye ſee the Son of Man ſitting at the 'right hand of Power, and coming in the 'clouds of heaven (*t*).' Moreover, our bleſſed Lord was acknowledged throughout all Iſrael as a prophet; and, but few days before, at his entrance into Jeruſalem, the people with loud acclamations had publicly proclaimed, 'This is 'Jeſus the prophet of Nazareth in Galilee (*u*).' Now, as prophets not only foretold things to come, but likewiſe uſed to diſcover ſecret things, as appears from the example of Eliſha (*x*); ſo they require the Lord Jeſus to give them a proof of his prophetic knowledge, by telling them, who were the particular perſons that ſtruck him while he was blindfolded. This indeed was the moſt malignant abuſe of our Saviour's prophetic office.

But this indignity offered the Lord of glory may put a true believer in mind of his ſinful depravity. For what is more cuſtomary, than for the Omniſcient Creator to be treated by ſinful men as if he were blind, and ignorant of their evil doings? They vainly imagine that they

(*t*) Matth. xxvi. 64. (*u*) Matth. xxi. 11.
(*x*) 2 Kings vi. 26.

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can conceal their ſins ſo dexterouſly, and conduct them with ſuch ſecreſy, that God will never know who ſtrikes at his honour, by offering him ſuch an inſult. Thus Judas, but a very little before, was an inſtance of the blindneſs of the human heart; who, when our bleſſed Lord ſpoke of his betrayer, had the effrontery to aſk him, 'Lord, is it I (*y*)?' On this preſumption the Spirit of God pronounces a woe: 'Woe 'unto them that ſeek deep to hide their counſel 'from the Lord; and their works are in the 'dark, and they ſay, Who ſeeth us, and who 'knoweth us (*z*)?'

Here the true believer may ſay, Thanks be to thee, my Saviour and Redeemer, for ſuffering thy ſacred face to be ſo reproachfully covered, that my face might not be eternally covered with ſhame; and that I may not be carried away to endleſs torments, but that with open face I may behold the glory of the Lord. O preſerve me from all thoſe ſins which brought on thee theſe indignities, and grant that I may one day, with the glorified Saints, behold thy glorious face in righteouſneſs (*a*)!

7. Laſtly, it is ſaid, 'And many other things 'blaſphemouſly ſpake they againſt him.' St. Luke ſeems to have been ſo affected with the ſubject, that he could not particularly enumerate all the ſarcaſms, invectives, and reproaches with which, in this hour of darkneſs, our bleſſed Saviour's ears were aſſaulted. He therefore breaks off abruptly, and ſays, 'Many other things blaſ-

(*y*) Matth. xvi. 25. (*z*) Iſaiah xxix. 15 (*a*) Pſalm xvii. 15.

'phe-

'phemouſly ſpake they againſt him;' which the Evangeliſt, probably, thought not worthy to be had in remembrance. Here were tongues ſet on fire of hell, and poſſeſſed by the ſpirit of calumny, which from them, as from bent bows, diſcharged numberleſs arrows of defamatory words againſt Jeſus the Son of God.

Here a pious ſoul may juſtly wonder on two accounts, which are not to be fathomed by its comprehenſion. The firſt is the long-ſuffering of the heavenly Father, who for ſome hours ſucceſſively ſaw, without diſplaying his power, his only beloved Son, the delight of his heart, and the expreſs image of his perſon, thus mocked, outraged, and beaten. The ſecond cauſe of wonder is the Son's patience, who, though he could by one word ſtrike theſe miſcreants dead, yet ſtands like a ſilent lamb; magnanimouſly deſpiſes reproach and contempt; and, amidſt all the uproar of ſcoffers and revilers, remains compoſed and undiſturbed. He neither reviled nor ſtruck again; and amidſt all the wrongs that were done him, both by words and actions, never ſhewed the leaſt inclination to revenge. On the contrary, he ſerenely lifted up his eyes to his heavenly Father, and recommended every thing to him, who judgeth righteouſly. Alas! may a true believer ſay, How unlike are modern Chriſtians to the pattern ſet them by their Lord and Maſter? How does a poor worm kindle into rage only at a diſagreeable look? Nay, it is made a point of honour to put up no affront; and meekneſs, though

ſanctified

ſanctified by the illuſtrious example of the Son of God, is accounted mean and ſcandalous; ſo many of the received maxims of honour are directly contrary to our Saviour's commands. I am very ſenſible, O my Saviour, that I have ſtill ſuch a haughty and impatient heart, and that I am very far from imitating the pattern of thy gentleneſs. I ſtrongly feel in myſelf the motions of anger, at the leaſt mockery, inſult, or abuſe, offered me. But I beſeech thee, O Lamb of God, that, by thy patience and longanimity, thou wilt quell the turbulent and rebellious motions of my heart; and grant me grace that, as in all other virtues, ſo likewiſe in gentleneſs and meekneſs, I may be conformed more and more unto thine image.

THE PRAYER.

O Eternal Wiſdom, bleſſed be thy glorious name for giving up thyſelf to the hands of ſinners, that we might be freed from the cords of Satan, in which he would eternally have led us, and which are now happily broken aſunder. Thanks be to thee, O Lord Jeſus, for all the mockeries, inſults, and indignities, which thou didſt endure. Spread over our ſins of pride and impatience the ſacred merit of thy meekneſs, and patience under theſe thy ſufferings. Forgive us all the ſins of our lives, which we have committed by petulancy, inſulting laughter, abuſe, ridicule, contempt, and reproach; or by a carnal impatience and revenge of affronts. Plant in our hearts a deſire of following thy example

ample of mildneſs and long-ſuffering, that we may rather chooſe to be reproached by the world for thy ſake, than to enjoy the pleaſures of ſin for a ſeaſon. Refine our nature with thy gentleneſs and longanimity, for the ſake of thy eternal love. Amen.

CONSIDERATION XI.

The ſecond examination and condemnation of CHRIST *before the* Jewiſh Sanhedrim.

'(*a*) AND ſtraightway in the morning, 'as ſoon as it was day, the chief 'Prieſts, the Elders of the people, and the 'Scribes, came together, and led him into their 'Council. And they ſaid, Art thou the Chriſt? 'Tell us. And he ſaid unto them, If I tell you, ye 'will not believe; and if I aſk you, ye will not 'anſwer me, nor let me go. Hereafter ſhall 'the Son of Man ſit on the right hand of the 'Power of God. Then ſaid they all, Art thou 'then the Son of God? And he ſaid unto them, 'Ye ſay that I am. And they ſaid, What 'need we any further witneſs? for we our-'ſelves have heard of his own mouth.'

In theſe words we have an account,

Firſt, Of the ſecond examination,

Secondly, The ſecond ſentence and condemnation of Chriſt, before the Jewiſh Sanhedrim.

I.

In the ſecond examination, four particulars offer themſelves to our conſideration.

(*a*) Matt. xxvii. 1. Mark xv. 1. Luke xxii. 66—71.

BIBLIOTHECA BODLEIANA

1. Here is mentioned the time when this was tranſacted. This was 'early in the morning, as 'ſoon as it was day.' During the night, which now was drawing to a period, the Sanhedrim had ſpent ſeveral hours ſucceſſively in examining and ſentencing our bleſſed Saviour; and afterwards, as nothing farther could be done till the next morning, the aſſembly had broke up, and delivered Jeſus into the hands of the ſoldiers and ſervants. Theſe, during the remainder of the night, committed againſt his ſacred perſon the moſt brutal indignities, as we have ſhewn above in the preceding Conſideration. But no ſooner did the day begin to dawn, than the whole Council met again; either, as ſome think, in a large apartment in the Temple, called Gazith, where they commonly uſed to meet; or, as others with greater probability imagine, they again aſſembled in Caiaphas's houſe, the place where they had met the night before: For St. John (*b*) does not ſay that they led Jeſus out of the Temple to the judgment-ſeat, but from Caiaphas, and out of his houſe. Though they had ſat very late, and had not retired to reſt but two hours before break of day; yet were they again aſſembled before ſun-riſe, that no time might be neglected for the diſpatch of their wicked purpoſes.

Oh! that the children of light were as careful to redeem the time, as theſe children of darkneſs, 'who ſleep not except they have 'done miſchief; and their ſleep is taken away,

(*b*) Chap. xviii. 28.

'unleſs they cauſe ſome to fall (*c*);' who, being impelled by the evil Spirit, are ſo indefatigable in the execution of their ſinful projects, that they value neither ſleep nor reſt, if they can but attain their wicked ends. Theſe members of the Sanhedrim were wretched ſlaves to the devil; who allowed them no reſt that night, but kept their eyes open, that they might not ſleep while they were employed in the works of darkneſs. At the ſame time, theſe ought to put many thouſands of indolent Chriſtians to the bluſh, who had rather omit the ſervice of God, than in the leaſt abridge themſelves of their natural reſt. Oh that we may for the future better employ our morning hours! Are the ſlaves of Satan ſo early abroad for the execution of their wicked deſigns, which they think will not admit of any delay? Shall not the children of light, who have ſuch important affairs on their hands, and are fighting for a never-fading crown of glory, likewiſe avail themſelves of the morning hours, when the mind is calm and ſerene, and is beſt diſpoſed for ſpiritual meditations, prayer, and other devout exerciſes? Satan is very induſtrious to gain the firſt poſſeſſion of the mind in the early hours of the day, as well as in youth, the morning of our lives, and to fill it with thoughts vain and frivolous, if not manifeſtly ſinful; or crouds it with a groupe of vitious thoughts, earthly cares, and worldly anxieties. For he well knows, that it is a great

(*c*) Proverbs iv. 16.

point

point gained, if he can but diſſipate our thoughts, before they are collected, and prepared for praying and praiſing God. Therefore, it behoves us to be wiſe and vigilant, and prevent his early incurſions. Our bleſſed Saviour, by appearing ſo early before the judgment-ſeat of the Jews, has obtained for us the privilege of early approaching the Throne of Grace. Let us, therefore, henceforth uſe this precious privilege with more humility, gratitude, and aſſiduity, than we have hitherto done.

2. The examiners and their aſſiſtants are here ſpecified: At this ſecond examination, all the Chief Prieſts, *i. e.* all thoſe perſons, who either were deſcended from any of the High Prieſts families, or had themſelves actually held that office; the Scribes, who ſtudied the law of Moſes, and explained the writings of the prophets; and laſtly, the Elders of the people who, though they were laymen, ſat likewiſe in Moſes's chair, and enforced the obſervance of the political law, which God had given by Moſes. Thus, all the members of the Sanhedrim or great Council were aſſembled on this occaſion. Poſſibly, ſeveral members of this great aſſembly might not have been preſent the night before: But as the ſentence of death, of which they had judged our Saviour guilty, was now to be ratified, and the execution of it to come under deliberation; they were all ſummoned, leſt the abſence of ſome of them ſhould caſt a reproach on the others who ſhould be preſent; or leſt it ſhould be

ſaid, that Chriſt was not condemned by the unanimous votes of all the members. However, though the aſſembly was more numerous than it had been the preceding night, yet it was ſtill the aſſembly of the wicked; and the ſentence it confirmed, was a moſt unjuſt and infamous ſentence: For what is in itſelf ſinful and iniquitous is not rendered more juſt or legal by a great number of ſuffrages. A bad cauſe is ſtill bad, though it be patronized by thouſands, and has the ſanction of the moſt reſpectable and numerous aſſemblies *.

3. Here is mentioned the drift of theſe wicked men, and the end of their meeting. 'They 'took counſel againſt Jeſus to put him to 'death (*d*).' It was their fixed reſolution that he ſhould die; but the end of this ſecond meeting was to confirm the ſentence which had already been paſſed, and to conſult on the readieſt and ſafeſt means for putting it in execution. It aggravates their guilt, that in their ſecond meeting, they had ſtill the ſame flagitious and bloodthirſty deſigns as in the firſt: For though a good

* Multitudo errantium non parit errori patrocinium. Intererant concilio Conſtantienſi, ubi Jo. HUSSI doctrina damnabatur, ejuſque corpus flammis addicebatur, præter *Cæſarem*, multorum *Regum* legati, tres *Electores*, ceterorum verò *Principum* ingens numerus, *Patriarchæ* tres, *Cardinales* viginti octo, *Epiſcopi* centum quinquaginta quinque, *Theologi* et *Juriſperiti* complures, Itali, Germani, Galli, Britanni, Pannonii, Poloni; teſte Jo. SLEIDANO, de *Statu Relig.* lib. II. p. 40. Quis verò noſtrum non damnat eorum ſententiam, in beatum martyrem injuſtiſſimè latam, licèt tot ſuffragiis conſentientis multitudinis confirmatam?

(*d*) Matth. xxvii. 1.

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intention cannot make a bad cauſe good; yet a wicked intention may render it ſtill worſe, and more unjuſtifiable. For inſtance, two perſons may be guilty of telling a lye. One utters a falſhood out of fear, and, perhaps to ſave his life from imminent danger; the other does it with a determinate purpoſe of bringing his neighbour in danger of his life: Doubtleſs, the lye which the latter is guilty of becomes more criminal than the lye of the former, becauſe his deſign is more malignant and pernicious. Again, two perſons may bring an ill report on their neighbour. One, perhaps, utters it from weakneſs of judgment, credulity, or ſimplicity, as he has heard the calumny from others; whereas, the other ſpreads it abroad with a view to prejudice his neighbour's reputation, and to render him odious to the world. Now, who will doubt but that the ſlander of the latter, in this inſtance, is much worſe than that of the former, on account of his ill intention? Thus the Jewiſh aſſembly, by the execrable deſign of its members, became an abomination to God, and all men of virtue and probity; ſince it is evident from hence, that the condemnation of the Meſſiah was not a ſudden thing, but that it was done with mature deliberation and malice prepenſe; which highly aggravated their guilt in the ſight of God.

4. Laſtly, We proceed to the examination itſelf, which conſiſted of two queſtions, and two anſwers.

The High Prieſt's firſt queſtion was this:

'Art thou the Chriſt? Tell us.' They had already put this queſtion to Jeſus; for it is ſaid by St. John (*e*), 'Then came the Jews round 'about him, and ſaid unto him, How long doſt 'thou make us to doubt? If thou be the Chriſt, 'tell us plainly *.' As if they had ſaid, We can gather nothing from thy words; ſince at one time thou calleſt thyſelf the Bread of Life, and another time the Light of the World, the Door of the ſheepfold, the Shepherd, *&c.* Therefore, tell us plainly, without any allegory or ſimilitude, whether thou art the Meſſiah, who was promiſed to our forefathers. This is what the members of this wicked aſſembly wanted to be informed of, in order to compaſs their deſigns. To this purpoſe, they had ordered our bleſſed Saviour from the lower apartments of the palace, where he had hitherto been under the care of the Officers and ſervants, to be brought before the Council. Here they propoſed this queſtion to him, 'Art thou the Chriſt or Meſſiah? adding this expreſs command to reſolve it, 'Tell us.' As if they had ſaid, Whatever ſcruples thou mayeſt have about declaring it ſo plainly to the people, it is thy duty to declare it to us; for we ſit in Moſes's chair as your lawful judges, and it concerns us greatly to know, whether thou art that great Prophet, promiſed long ſince by Moſes. Thus they were for putting a good gloſs upon this queſtion, that Jeſus might be under the leſs apprehenſion of frankly declar-

(*e*) Chap. x. 24. * παῤῥησια. Vide John xvi 29.

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ing the truth to them. Thus the perſecutors of the ſervants of God ſtill are very expert at the art of inſpiring confidence into them, by their interrogations, in order to get the whole truth out of them.

To this firſt queſtion, our Saviour gives a plain anſwer. This, indeed, was more than they could reaſonably expect, as Jeſus had, but a few hours before, fully anſwered the ſame queſtion. The man who had been born blind, though but a perſon of mean condition, at length grew angry, when the great Council ſo often queſtioned him about the ſame thing; for when they ſaid again to him, 'What did he to thee? 'How opened he thine eyes?' He anſwered them, 'I have told ye already, and ye did not 'hear, or attend to what I ſaid. Wherefore 'would ye hear it again? Will ye alſo be his 'diſciples (*f*)? Thus he grew out of patience, when he was teized with ſo many queſtions about the ſame tranſaction. But the Son of God here ſhews an admirable example of patience; and readily returns an anſwer to the repeated queſtions of his enemies, that his ſilence might not give them a handle to ſay that his anſwers were equivocal, or that his ſilence ſhewed his contempt of the Rulers and Judges. However, he ſo framed his anſwer, as to convey an additional ſting to their conſciences; for this anſwer contained, not only a mild reproof of his

(*f*) John ix. 26, 27.

unrighteous judges, but likewiſe a repeated declaration of his approaching glory.

In the reproof which our bleſſed Lord gives to his unrighteous judges, he repreſents to them their unbelief, and invincible obſtinacy.

1. Their unbelief is reproved in theſe words: 'If I tell you, ye will not believe.' They had juſt before required the Lord Jeſus to tell them, whether he was the Chriſt; to which he made this anſwer. As if he had ſaid, "If ye "will not acknowledge me to be the Meſſiah, "from the works which I have done, eſpe- "cially the Divine miracles which I have "wrought, much leſs will ye believe me on my "bare word, ſhould I aver it to you a hundred "times over. This your reiterated queſtion, there- "fore, as it does not proceed from a candid en- "quiry after truth, inſtead of a freſh anſwer, "rather deſerves a reproof for your incredulity." But this reproof the Saviour of mankind uttered, with the moſt ſenſible concern for the unparalleled unbelief and obduracy of his judges. He had earneſtly laboured, during the courſe of his Miniſtry, to bring the Jews to a belief of this great truth, *viz.* that he was the Meſſiah. He had plainly declared to them the terrible conſequences of their unbelief, in theſe words, 'If ye 'believe not that I am He [the Meſſiah], ye ſhall 'die in your ſins (*g*).' On the other hand, he had repreſented to them the glorious privileges, and ineſtimable benefits, of faith in the Meſſiah: 'He

(*g*) John viii, 24.

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'that believeth on me hath everlasting life (*b*).' But all these endeavours of the benevolent Jesus had made no impression on their obdurate hearts. He was now inwardly grieved, to see how these wicked and perverse men would die in their unbelief, and consequently would perish in their sins; and from this inward and tender concern for their souls proceeded his reproof.

2. Their invincible obstinacy is represented in these words: 'And if I ask you, ye will 'not answer me, nor let me go.' The meaning of these words is, "Though I answer your "question, you do not believe me; and if, by "proposing other questions to you, I should en-"deavour to put you in the way of truth, "yet such is your obstinacy that ye will give "me no answer. You will not take into con-"sideration this important article of the Jewish "Theology." This behaviour of the Jews Christ had more than once experienced. Thus, it is said by St. Luke (*i*), 'And behold there 'was a certain man before him, who had the 'dropsy. And Jesus answering, spake unto the 'Lawyers and Pharisees, saying, Is it lawful 'to heal on the sabbath day? And they held 'their peace.' It is likewise observed by St. Matthew (*k*), that when our blessed Lord proposed a question about the baptism of John to the chief Priests and the Elders, they returned no

(*b*) John vi. 47.
(*i*) Chap. xiv. 2, 3.
(*k*) Chap. xxi. 23—27.

other

other anſwer but 'We cannot tell.' As this had been their cuſtom when Jeſus freely converſed with them, it was much more probable that they would behave in the ſame rude manner, as he was now their priſoner. Had Jeſus in theſe circumſtances aſked them ſome queſtions, in order to draw ſufficient proofs from their anſwers that he was the Meſſiah *; had he, for inſtance, aſked them, why they permitted John the Baptiſt to be looked upon as the Meſſiah, though he performed no miracles? why they did not believe that ſame Baptiſt, when he declared him to be the Meſſiah, and pointed him out to the people, ſaying, 'Behold the Lamb of God that taketh 'away the ſins of the world?' *&c.* they would either have kept a ſullen and contemptuous ſilence, or haughtily anſwered, We are not come here to be examined by thee, but to examine our priſoner. And however their conſciences might have been touched by his queſtions; however he might have convinced them of the truth; yet they would not have ſet him at liberty, nor let him go. For it was before abſolutely determined to put him to death at all events, whether he ſhould be found innocent, or guilty.

* Ἐαν δε και ἐροτησω, Si interrogavero vos, *hoc eſt, Si qua argumenta proponam, quibus me Chriſtum eſſe probem.* Argumentari *enim Hebræi, non minùs quàm Græci, ſolebant* interrogando. *Rectè autem dicit Chriſtus,* non reſponſuros. *Sciebat enim, hoc illis propoſitum non ut ſe rationibus revincerent, ſed ut opprimerent auctoritate.* HUGO GROTIUS *in Annot. ad Luc.* XXII. 68. Edit, *Baſil.* An. 1732. Tom. II. p. 544.

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He therefore repreſents to them their iniquitous deſigns, and evil diſpoſitions: and by that means gives them to underſtand, that he ſaw into the inmoſt receſſes of their hearts, and knew their moſt ſecret thoughts and intentions. This ſhould have induced this haughty aſſembly to conclude, that they had before them a ſacred Perſon who was more than man. This is the deſign of the firſt part of our Saviour's anſwer.

The ſecond part of it contains a repeated declaration of his approaching glorification, and exaltation to the right hand of God: 'Here-'after ſhall the Son of Man ſit at the right 'hand of the power of God.' This I call a repeated declaration; for our bleſſed Saviour had, two hours before, uſed words of the ſame import, which have been already explained in Conſideration IX. The meaning of the words is, as if our bleſſed Lord had addreſſed them in theſe, or words of the like purport: "I am "not ignorant, that my contemptible and ab-"ject appearance is the chief cauſe of your "unbelief; for ſuch an obſcure condition by no "means agrees with your prejudices about a "powerful Meſſiah, ſurrounded by all the en-"ſigns of majeſty. But you ought to conſider "that the Meſſiah, in the writings of the "Prophets which are every ſabbath read in your "ears, is repreſented to you in a two-fold "ſtate; the one a ſtate of the loweſt abaſement "and humiliation, and the other a ſtate of the "higheſt exaltation and glory. I have hitherto

"converſed

" converſed with you in my low, abject ſtate;
" but a few hours more brings this ſtate of a-
" baſement to a period. For when ye ſhall
" have executed the ſentence of death which
" you have paſſed on me, this deſpiſed Son of
" Man, who at preſent ſtands before you bound
" like a criminal, and will ſoon be ſtript naked,
" and hung on the croſs like a thief or a mur-
" derer, ſhall riſe again from the dead; ſhall
" aſcend up to heaven in a viſible and triumph-
" phant manner; and ſhall ſit on the right
" hand of God, or be admitted into the parti-
" cipation of his unlimited power over heaven
" and earth. After that, an effectual anſwer to
" your queſtion ſhall come from heaven, and
" ye ſhall ſee, feel, and experience ſuch proofs
" and manifeſtations of my Divine glory, as
" will force your aſſent to this truth; eſpecially
" when, with ſuch a ſwiftneſs and rapidity as
" if I rode on the clouds of heaven, the chariots
" of God, I ſhall come to deſtroy your polity,
" and accompliſh on your devoted city and
" temple thoſe judgments of God, which have
" long ſince been denounced againſt them."
This is the purport of the firſt anſwer, which our Lord made to the firſt queſtion, *viz.* 'Art 'thou the Chriſt?'

On this follows the ſecond queſtion; namely, 'Art thou then the Son of God?' They took occaſion to propoſe this ſecond queſtion from our bleſſed Saviour's repeated declaration, mentioned above. They readily comprehended that Chriſt,

by

by ſaying that he ſhould ſit at the right hand of Power, intimated that he was a perſon of tranſcendent dignity, and equal with God. Therefore they were deſirous to know, whether he ſtill adhered to this declaration that he was the Son of God, and that, in ſuch a ſenſe as to be deemed equal to the God of Iſrael in majeſty and glory. This his twofold dignity, of being the Meſſiah, and the Son of God, was, according to the Scriptures of the Old Teſtament, to center in one perſon. This may be gathered from the following, among other paſſages, where God ſpeaks to the perſon who is there termed the Anointed or Meſſiah, 'Thou 'art my Son, this day have I begotten thee (*l*);' and from this the Jewiſh church might have learned, that the Meſſiah was alſo to be the Son of God, However this crafty and inſidious judge was for examining the Lord Jeſus on each point ſeparately, in order to make a complicated crime of his anſwer. And though this queſtion, 'Art thou the Son of God?' had been anſwered by our bleſſed Lord the night before; yet in the morning they queſtioned him a ſecond time about it, in order to give their infamous hypocriſy a more ſpecious appearance, as if they were unwilling to proceed haſtily in ſo important a matter. They pretended, that poſſibly the priſoner had not rightly conſidered the matter, but in the firſt agitations of his mind might have inadvertently ſaid what he is now ſorry for;

(*l*) Pſalm. ii. 7.

that

that probably he would now recall his blaſphemy, and explain himſelf better. But in their malicious hearts they had firmly determined, whatever anſwers Jeſus might return to their queſtions, to put him to death, and that with all poſſible expedition.

Hereupon follows Our Saviour's ſecond anſwer in theſe words: 'He ſaid unto them, Ye 'ſay that I am.' Here Jeſus gives them again a plain anſwer, and, as it were, repeats his declaration. As if he had ſaid, "I am the Son "of God in the ſame ſenſe that your queſtion "propoſes it. I am ſuch a Son of God as is "equal to his Father, and has in common with "him the Divine Nature, and all its eſſential at-"tributes." Now this was the confeſſion which they wanted to hear; this declaration of Chriſt they catched at, like ravenous wolves; for they pretended that now they might ſafely ratify the ſentence of death. Hence we may deduce the following doctrines.

1. Obſtinate infidelity is ſo far from being heroiſm, that it is the moſt culpable folly.

Our Saviour here expreſly reproves the chief Prieſts and Scribes for not believing him to be the Meſſiah, after he had given ſufficient proof of it by his wonderful works, and divine miracles. Nay, our bleſſed Lord was highly offended at the unbelief of his own diſciples; for, on ſome appearance of it in two of his followers, after his Reſurrection, he thus reproves them, 'O fools! and ſlow of heart to believe

'all

'all that the Prophets have ſpoken (*m*).' Here Chriſt gives their incredulity no better an appellation, than folly. However, there is a claſs of men among whom infidelity paſſes for the ſtandard of wiſdom, and who highly value themſelves on their ſingularity in not believing as others do. They would fain be looked upon as Free-Thinkers, who have a deeper inſight into the Nature of things; who have got over vulgar prejudices and the doctrines of religion, which, though ſwallowed by the ignorant herd, will not go down with them. But theſe Free-Thinkers * and heroic Spirits, theſe refined Geniuſes who affect to diſtinguiſh themſelves from the vulgar by infidelity, and, without any juſt grounds, or reaſonable enquiry after truth, reject the very fundamental principles of Chriſtianity, as things only fit for credulous minds; theſe, I ſay, are repreſented by the unerring Spirit of God as mere fools: 'The fool hath ſaid in his 'heart there is no God (*n*).' Satan, it is true, makes uſe of a weak credulity for plunging a perſon into ruin; but an obſtinate and inſolent unbelief, which ridicules the cleareſt proofs, and will by no means be convinced, is certainly no virtue, or ſign of an heroic ſpirit. Such an irrational fool, who boaſts of his abſolute infidelity, acts as abſurdly, as if a deformed dwarf ſhould entertain an high opinion of his perſon, becauſe

(*m*) Luke xxiv. 25. (*n*) Pſalm xiv. 1.

* The Author makes uſe of the French name which theſe men aſſume, *Eſprits forts*, i. e. Daring Spirits, Bold-Thinkers.

his

his ſhape is not according to the common proportions of Nature; or, as if a perſon who is born blind ſhould value himſelf on the want of ſight, and would have it looked upon as a ſingular proof of the ſtrength of his intellects, that he believes nothing of light and colours. Monſters of impiety and abſurdity! who make God a liar, that they may paſs for men of uncommon wiſdom and penetration: for he that believeth not God hath made him a liar (*o*); and what more intolerable affront can be offered to the Supreme Being, than to make a liar of the God of Wiſdom and Truth?

2. When the Word of God reveals to us our condition, let us beware of hardening our hearts againſt its ſacred influences by unbelief and ſelf-love, leſt this reproof of our bleſſed Saviour ſhould be applicable to us, 'If I tell you, 'ye will not believe.'

Many when they read the Word of God experience its illuminating power on their underſtanding, laying open the condition of their ſouls; ſo that they plainly perceive, that they are not in that happy ſtate of ſalvation which the Word of God requires. But, how ſuperlatively unhappy is the man, who ſhuts his heart againſt theſe enlightening rays of the Divine Word! who obſtinately hardens his heart through unbelief againſt the teſtimony of unerring Wiſdom; and though he be convinced of his impenitence, and that he is void of faith towards God, and love to man-

(*o*) 1 John v. 10.

kind,

kind, yet will by no means believe it. On the contrary, he ſuffers himſelf to be ſo blinded and ſeduced by ſelf-love, as to fancy his condition much better than in reality it is. Let every one, therefore, as he values the ſalvation of his immortal ſoul, beware of this fond error, ſince it leads to hardneſs of heart and final impenitence; and ſeriouſly think on theſe words which the Holy Spirit applies to every ſinner, 'To-day 'if ye will hear his voice, harden not your 'hearts (*p*).'

3. It is a melancholy caſe, when the conſcience is ſo hardened that Divine Truths will make no impreſſion on it, and the ſinner is ſilent to all the remonſtrances of grace.

Here our bleſſed Saviour had to do with ſuch obdurate judges, that nothing he could urge to awaken their conſciences could convince, or extort an anſwer from them; ſo that to them might be rightly applied theſe words of the Pſalmiſt, 'Do ye indeed ſpeak righteouſneſs, 'O congregation? Do ye judge uprightly, 'O ye ſons of men (*q*)!' Alas! how many are there to be met with that call themſelves Chriſtians, who are of this ſtamp. If one enters into diſcourſe with, and pathetically repreſents to, them the dangerous ſtate of their ſouls; if one endeavours by the ſtrongeſt and moſt convincing arguments to bring them to a ſenſe of their ſins, and by the moſt earneſt and preſſing exhortations to touch their hearts; what a me-

(*p*) Heb. iii. 7, 8. (*q*) Pſalm lviii. 1.

lancholy ſight is it to ſee ſuch perſons unmoved and unaffected, without giving the leaſt aſſurance that they will uſe their endeavours to reform their lives? Theſe are certainly very mortifying proofs of the depravity of the human heart, and the power of ſin; which gradually hardens it, and renders the ſinner inſenſible to all inſtruction, and the awakening calls of God's word.

4. We muſt paſs through many examinations and ſevere trials before we can be owned for the ſons of God.

When Chriſt firſt entered on his miniſterial office, no ſooner had the voice from heaven proclaimed, ſaying, 'This is my beloved Son, 'in whom I am well pleaſed,' but he was tempted on this account by Satan; who preſumptuouſly ſaid to him, 'If thou art the Son of 'God, command that theſe ſtones be made bread; 'if thou art the Son of God, caſt thyſelf down, '*&c.* (*r*).' And now, at the concluſion of his miniſtry, the engines of Satan put this queſtion to him twice ſucceſſively within a few hours, 'Art 'thou the Son of God?' But as it was with our Head, the great Captain of our Salvation; ſo is it now with his members and faithful followers. While a man is walking on in his ſecurity before converſion, Satan rejoices to find him reckoning himſelf among the adopted ſons of God. Nay, he helps to ſtrengthen him in his falſe opinion of his own ſanctity; and repreſents to him, that to doubt whether he be the ſon of God is the moſt

(*r*) Matt. iv. 3, 6.

dan-

dangerous error he can be guilty of. Thus he works upon the minds of Enthuſiaſts, who are generally puffed up with a high conceit of their own worthineſs, and think themſelves the peculiar favourites of God. But no ſooner is God pleaſed to receive a truly penitent and regenerated perſon, through faith in Jeſus Chriſt, to be in reality his adopted ſon, than Satan begins to fill his mind with a thouſand ſcruples about his acceptance with God; lays hold of his foibles and the ſlighteſt faults, from which no man can be free in this life; and endeavours to perſuade him, that his hope and labour in the Lord are vain and fruitleſs. On the other hand, he, who never in his life had any doubt concerning his being the adopted ſon of God, has great reaſon to ſuſpect his aſſurance and carnal ſecurity.

5. Chriſt, by his firm and reſolute adherence to his declaration of the truth, has atoned for our wavering inconſtancy, and irreſolute behaviour in defending the truth.

This fault is frequently ſeen in courts of judicature, where thoſe who are examined by the judges, concerning their real or ſuppoſed crimes, often have recourſe to falſhood or equivocation; and inſtead of adhering to the truth, relate things ſometimes one way, and ſometimes another, in order to puzzle the cauſe. This is likewiſe a fault in common converſation, and in private life. For as there are many who, according to the Scripture phraſe, are 'double

'hearted *;' ſo there are not a few who are likewiſe, as it were, double-tongued †; who talk in a religious ſtrain when they are among the good and pious, and quite in a different language when among the diſſolute and profane; who would paſs for virtuous men when it can be done without incurring danger; but when any inconveniency is to be apprehended they diſclaim the name of religious men, and rather join in ridiculing and reviling the godly. There are many who every day pray, in repeating the Lord's Prayer, 'Forgive us our treſpaſſes, 'and deliver us from the evil one ‡;' but ſoon after will devote themſelves to the devil, and utter the moſt horrid oaths and imprecations without any remorſe, or ſenſe of their wicked habit. Such monſters of men are to be found among thoſe who call themſelves Chriſtians! Nay, we daily ſee great numbers of ſuch profane ſwearers who yet make a great figure in the world, and hold very conſiderable employments. Oh, that they would acknowledge this their ſcandalous duplicity of tongue, and turn to the immaculate Lamb of God in whoſe mouth was no deceit, guile, or prevarication! That they would conſider how abſurd and monſtrouſly wicked it muſt appear in the eye of God

* בלב ולב ידברו Duplici corde loquuntur. Literally, they ſpeak with two hearts, Pſalm xii. 3. St. James calls ſuch a perſon διψυχος a double-minded man, Chap. i. 8. *W.*

† Hos Διγλωσσους *Bilingues* vocat *Siracides.* Eccius. xxviii. 13. *W.*

‡ ἀπο του πονηρου may be thus rendered with great propriety. *W.*

and

and all good men, that praying and curſing ſhould proceed out of the ſame mouth!

II.

The ſecond ſentence or condemnation of the Lord Jeſus is thus deſcribed: 'And they ſaid, 'What need we any farther witneſs? for we 'ourſelves have heard of his own mouth (*s*).' Before this, they had been very induſtrious in procuring witneſſes; yet after all their ſeveral depoſitions, they found it was to no purpoſe. But when the bleſſed Jeſus afterwards acknowledged himſelf to be the Meſſiah and the Son of God, they dropped all the evidences of their witneſſes, and endeavoured to convict him on his own confeſſion; which, in their blindneſs, they thought contained the moſt horrid blaſphemy. When our bleſſed Saviour made this confeſſion for the firſt time, the High Prieſt ſaid, 'Behold, now ye 'have heard his blaſphemy. What think ye?' At this ſecond confeſſion they all unanimouſly ſay, 'We ourſelves have heard of his own 'mouth.' As if they had ſaid, "Since he "abides by his former declaration, *viz.* that he "is the Meſſiah, the Son of God; ſo we "abide by our ſentence, that he is guilty of "death. We ſuppoſed the priſoner would "have thought better of the matter; but now "we ſee that he is an obſtinate blaſphemer, "and that God has given him up to the judg"ment of obduracy. His blood be on his own "head! But we are in conſcience obliged to

(*s*) Luke xxii. 71.

"cut

" cut off the evil one from Iſrael, that the " righteouſneſs of God, which has been ſo highly " injured by his blaſphemy, may receive ſome " atonement by his blood."

But how could theſe miſcreants, ' who had ' ears, but did not hear (*t*),' ſay, We have heard his blaſphemy; for though they heard the ſound of our Saviour's words, yet their groſs minds were utterly incapable of rightly comprehending their true meaning. Hence they called one of the moſt important articles of the Jewiſh religion blaſphemy, and paſſed ſentence of death on Him, whom God had appointed to be judge of the quick and the dead. However, we may on this occaſion ſay, ' Even ' our enemies themſelves are judges (*u*)' and witneſſes, that Jeſus, our Mediator, has openly profeſſed himſelf the Son of God; which authentic teſtimony we may uſe to our advantage againſt all the oppoſers of our bleſſed Saviour's Divinity. We ſhall deduce the following inferences from what has been here ſaid.

1. The time of repentance, which God graciouſly allows to ſinners, before they have filled up the meaſure of their iniquities, if not rightly improved, is an aggravation of their guilt.

In this ſecond condemnation of Chriſt, the members of the Sanhedrim acted a much more ſinful part than in the former. If, in the firſt ſentence they pronounced on our bleſſed Lord, they were carried away by the violence of their

(*t*) Iſaiah vi. 10. (*u*) Deut. xxxii. 31.

paſſions,

paſſions, God was graciouſly pleaſed to allow them ſome hours, cooly to reflect on what they had done. They ought then to have liſtened to the Pſalmiſt's exhortation, 'Stand in awe and ſin 'not: Commune with your own heart upon 'your bed, and be ſtill (*x*).' They ſhould have calmly conſidered the unjuſt ſentence they had paſſed, and what remarkable words had been ſpoken by the bleſſed Jeſus before the Council. But ſince, notwithſtanding this time of recollection allowed them, they proceeded to a ſecond condemnation of the Son of God, and again confirmed the unjuſt ſentence they had before pronounced on him, they incurred an additional guilt by their perſeverance.

Let us ſeriouſly attend to this truth, *viz.* The greater the convictions are which precede a ſin, and the more time for recollection God is graciouſly pleaſed to grant to a ſinner before he leaves him to fill up the meaſure of his iniquity, the greater and more heinous are his tranſgreſſions after ſuch indulgence. And though we may take no notice of ſuch intervals allowed us for reflection, yet God keeps an exact account of them; ſo that not only our actual ſins, but alſo the aggravating circumſtances attending them, will be all diſplayed to the whole world at the laſt tremendous day. Happy are they in the court of whoſe conſciences this circumſtance is already duly examined during this life; who are throughly ſenſible of their

(*x*) Pſalm iv. 5.

ſins

ſins, and all the aggravations connected with them, and are filled with concern and remorſe for the number and heinouſneſs of their tranſgreſſions! They may yet eſcape condemnation in the day of judgment, and find the remiſſion of their ſins in the propitiatory ſacrifice of Jeſus Chriſt, their Saviour and Redeemer.

2. That the enemies of our bleſſed Lord derived the grounds of our Saviour's conviction and condemnation from our Saviour's own words, is a circumſtance of great moment.

'They ſaid, we ourſelves have heard of 'his own mouth;' ſo that they did not pronounce the ſentence of death on hear-ſay evidence, but on what they themſelves heard from Jeſus himſelf.

By this, Chriſt has, in the firſt place, ſanctified the ſufferings of his faithful ſervants; ſince their judges frequently endeavour to extort ſome confeſſion from their own mouths, that may afford a handle for a charge of hereſy, and a falſe condemnation. Thus when that godly martyr John Huſs was ſentenced to be burnt alive, a certain Doctor falſely declared that, from his own mouth, he had heard him attribute four Perſons to the God-head. The like circumſtance has been obſerved in numberleſs inſtances in the trials of Chriſtians, when for the ſake of their Saviour's doctrine and honour, they were to be condemned to death. This ſpecies of ſuffering, therefore, the Son of God has ſanctified to us by permitting himſelf to be ſentenced for words which came out of his own mouth.

Our

Our bleſſed Saviour has, in the ſecond place, averted the heavy judgments which otherwiſe would have fallen on thoſe who, by their innumerable, profane, and impious words, have deſerved condemnation. When a ſinner is awakened by his conſcience; when he conſiders that the ſins of his tongue will be laid open in God's preſence, and at the ſame time, recollects theſe words of Jeſus Chriſt, 'By thy words thou 'ſhalt be condemned (*y*); Out of thine own 'mouth will I judge thee, thou wicked ſer-'vant (*z*)! his mind muſt be certainly thrown into violent convulſions and inward agonies. But the eternal Son of God permitted himſelf to be judged and condemned from his own words, that the ſentence of condemnation might be annulled, and ſtrict judgment averted from all thoſe who ſincerely repent of the ſins of their mouth, and believe on his name. He has permitted himſelf to be ſentenced to die from his own words, as one who condemned himſelf, that we might not by our own words be condemned to everlaſting death. But to this unſpeakable conſolation thoſe only are entitled, who penitently acknowledge the numberleſs ſins of their tongues; who are filled with remorſe and anguiſh on the account of them, and dread the judgments of God; who make the immaculate Lamb of God, in whoſe mouth was no deceit, their refuge, give up their hearts to him, and perſevere to the end in an uniform imitation of Jeſus Chriſt.

(*y*) Matth. xii. 37. (*z*) Luke xix. 22.

3. Our bleſſed Saviour in ſuffering himſelf to be ſentenced to death for his declaration, that he was the Son of God, obliges all of us to adhere to this important truth unto death.

To this great truth, namely, that Jeſus is the Son of God, a noble army of Martyrs have already ſubſcribed with their blood. Therefore it behoves us to be thoroughly convinced of, and ſtrenuouſly to defend, this important article of our faith. If ever there was a time when it was neceſſary to defend this truth, it is the preſent age, when the poiſon of Socinianiſm clandeſtinely ſpreads itſelf, and moſt eaſily infects thoſe who ſet up for men of the greateſt parts and genius. Let us then implore God, that he will give us a ſteadfaſt faith in his Son, and ſtrengthen us againſt all the power of the gates of hell. It is an unſpeakable comfort to us, that Chriſt, by his being thus condemned to die, has acquired both ſtrength and boldneſs for ſo many of his faithful ſervants to ſign this his good confeſſion with their blood; who now are received by him into the manſions of bliſs, and, in the Divine preſence, are filled with joy by the adorable Son of God, who ſitteth at the right hand of his Father.

Thus by God's aſſiſtance we have gone through that part of the hiſtory of our bleſſed Saviour's paſſion, which contains the Sufferings he endured before the Sanhedrim or ſpiritual Court of the Jews at Jeruſalem. May God, by his bleſſing, impreſs on our hearts all that has been ſaid on this intereſting ſubject! May every

every truth that has been deduced and inculcated from it be ſealed by his Holy Spirit to our ſalvation; ſo that they may be to none of us a ſavour of death unto death, or an aggravation of our guilt, but rather the ſavour of life unto life everlaſting.

THE PRAYER.

O Faithful and ever-living Saviour! We praiſe thee for all the ſufferings and indignities thou didſt undergo, for our ſake, before the Spiritual Court of the Jews. We bleſs thee, O Lord, who didſt ſuffer thyſelf to be brought before the judgment-ſeat of men, that we might appear with boldneſs before the awful tribunal of God. We praiſe thee for permitting ſentence of death to be paſſed on thee, that the ſentence of everlaſting death might to us be changed to a ſentence of life. We bleſs thee for twice making thy conſtant and invariable confeſſion of the truth, when thou didſt declare thyſelf to be the Chriſt the Son of God, who came into the world to make us, miſerable ſinners, happy, and by thy Mediation to reconcile heaven and earth. O bleſſed Lord and Saviour! make us alſo true Chriſtians, and adopted Sons of God, that we may likewiſe confeſs the truth with boldneſs. Deliver from the ſnares of Satan all thoſe who are yet entangled in them; diſcover their nakedneſs to thoſe who ſtill reſt in mere external performances, or deſpiſe thy Goſpel, that they may be forced, like

like death-devoted ſinners, to fly to thy merits, and with tears of repentance to ſeek thy righteouſneſs. Draw every penitent ſoul to thyſelf; irradiate it with the comforts which flow from thy condemnation and ſufferings. Preſerve, O Lord, by thy Grace, all thoſe who have hitherto ſerved thee in ſincerity and truth, and grant that they may remain faithful unto death. Finally, be pleaſed to bleſs every truth which has been here delivered, to the eternal glory of thy name, and the ſalvation of our ſouls. Amen.

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The END of the FIRST VOLUME.



ERRATA.

Page 55. l. 15 *for* depreciating *read* deprecating.
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